

THRILLING SUMMER ISSUE
WONDER STORIES

15¢

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

CHARLIE BERGER



DEAD CITY
An Amazing Novel
By MURRAY LEINSTER

—
Titan OF THE JUNGLE
A Startling Complete Novel
By STANTON A. COBLENTZ



Let your HEAD take you

(The average American today has a choice of just going where "his feet take him", or choosing wisely the course to follow. Let's skip ahead 10 years, and take a look at John Jones—and listen to him . . .)

"SOMETIMES I feel so good it almost scares me.

"This house—I wouldn't swap a shingle off its roof for any other house on earth. This little valley, with the pond down in the hollow at the back, is the spot I like best in all the world.

"And they're mine. I own 'em. Nobody can take 'em away from me.

"I've got a little money coming in, regularly. Not much—but enough. And I tell you, when you can go to bed every night with nothing on your mind except the fun you're going to have tomorrow—that's as near Heaven as man gets on this earth!

"It wasn't always so.

"Back in '46—that was right after the war and sometimes the going wasn't too easy—I needed cash. Taxes were tough,

and then Ellen got sick. Like almost everybody else, I was buying Bonds through the Payroll Plan—and I figured on cashing some of them in. But sick as she was, it was Ellen who talked me out of it.

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"Well, even after she got better, I stayed away from the weekly poker game—quit dropping a little cash at the hot spots now and then—gave up some of the things a man feels he has a right to. We didn't have as much fun for a while but we paid our taxes and the doctor and—we didn't touch the Bonds.

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THRILLING WONDER STORIES

Vol. XXVIII, No. 3

Every Story Brand New

Summer, 1946



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By STANTON A. COBLENTZ

A mysterious fluid of enlightenment reverses the order of the world—and only Mark Haverside and the Pembrooks, armed with slingshots and courage, can set things right!.....

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Cover Painting by Earle Bergey—illustrating "Titan of the Jungle"

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June, 1946, issue

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A Department Conducted by SERGEANT SATURN

ECOD, Froggo, ye Sarge's poisonal art gallery is getting a number of parsecs out of hand—and, remember, this old space dog has only four of them. Latest and by far the most ambitious effort to come over the visiscreens is that here shown—which is fair enough as a likeness, but so unkind in the matter of expression. Especially where the Sarge's expression is concerned!



What's that, Wart-ears? You say this peetot's eyes did bug so with rage and frustration when the Xeno ran out last trip? Why, you trebly cursed epicenic from the mire-stained surface of Venus, you had your back turned at the time, just as in the picture, and don't tell the Sarge those ugly bumps on your ears enable you to see out of the back of your head. That is Frogeyes' speciality.

As for that, you were bellowing, Snaggle-

tooth, especially when you found the bung starter caught in . . . but never mind *that*. As above, the drawing will do for a likeness, at least until the next trip. Pluto alone knows what the Sarge's own bobby sox and reat pleat section will have ready for him then.

Kidding aside, we think it's a brilliant job. And Kiwi W. Robert Gibson, of Calgary, Alberta, who done it, deserves some sort of a reward. What say, Snaggletooth? You have marked a Xeno-primed atom bomb especially for him with interspatial radar direction finder already attached? That might do it—but don't you feel he deserves something more than that? Mull it over, you orthodontological bad dream.

With his priceless *chef d'oeuvre*, Kiwi Gibson enclosed an epistle. Perhaps its publication is just the reward ye Sarge and his much-maligned cohorts are looking for. At any rate, here it is—

BUT OF COURSE

By W. Robert Gibson

Dear Sergeant Saturn: Some version of this letter would have reached you sooner or later now that I am back from the wars. But it would have waited until I'd caught up with more back numbers if a Rehabilitation Counsellor hadn't suggested sending samples of my sketching for opinions. So I got some india ink and turned out the first attempt in that medium. A fountain pen has served hitherto.

You recognize the subjects, of course. The saturnine Sergeant with happy little family gathered around him in its collective role of Ganymede (classical, not astronomical variety). I think the Sergeant is suggesting that somebody stop posing and make a delivery, while Wart-ears wistfully considers the excessive emptiness of empties.

Didn't have as much luck collecting mags as I'd hoped for, while overseas, but found quite a few waiting when I got back. I'm reading back issues now and accumulating the current ones. While away and since returning, I've read seventeen TWS's, eight SS's and two Cap Futures. Herewith a list of the best stories therein, in one reader's opinion. Hope it interests you. The scale of rating is 4-Plus on top, 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0. You may count in vats of Xeno if you choose.

4-Plus is easily listed. There were none.

4. Earth for Inspiration—Clifford D. Simak

(Continued on page 8)



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THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 6)

- Via Jupiter—Eando Binder
- Tarnished Utopia—Malcolm Jameson
- Via Catacombs—Gordon A. Giles
- "Shall Stay These Carriers . . ."—Nelson S. Bond
- Blind Victory—Oscar J. Friend
- Crash on Vian—Joseph J. Millard
- The Lost Planet—Barry Cord
- The Indestructible—Robert Arthur
- The Land of Time to Come—Henry Kuttner
- Who Was Thomas Morrow—Robert Moore Williams
- Island in the Sky—Manly Wade Wellman
- Plants Must Grow—Frank Belknap Long
- The Voice—Ross Rocklynne
- The Gods Hate Kansas—Joseph L. Millard
- Christmas on Ganymede—Isaac Asimov
- Gears for Nemesis—Raymond Z. Gallun
- Luxury Liner—Nelson S. Bond
- Death on the Siderite—D. D. Sharp
- This Is Hell—Oscar J. Friend
- Mr. John Doe, Earthman—Joseph J. Millard
- The Infinite Moment—Henry Kuttner
- Plants Must Slay—Frank Belknap Long
- False Dawn—Henry Kuttner
- City of Glass—Noel Loomis
- The Man in the Moon—William Morrison
- Too Many Cooks—Henry Kuttner
- De Profundis—Murray Leinster

There were 61 stories at 2, which is poor; 46 at 1, which is worse, and three zeros. Authors not mentioned on the above list don't average very high. Hamilton, for instance, hasn't written one rated above 2 for years. His overall average is about 1.5—and you didn't seem to be using any authors averaging above 4 (but none of them are very prolific).

This last paragraph isn't very commendatory, but it may be that more recent issues rate higher. I've noticed Murray Leinster's name on some I've not yet had time to read, and I have hopes.—2421-25 A Street, S. West Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Zounds, Froggo, Pee-lot Gibson is heaping injury on insult methinks. But since one of the joys of critical fandom is every man to his own taste, there is little this old space dog can say or do save to order up some more Xeno and drink 'er down.

However, he is a little surprised that this comet from Calgary should not have found something more "commendatory" in Wilm Carver's "You'll See a Pink House" and Fred Brown's "Pi in the Sky," both of which appeared in the same issue of TWS (Winter, 1945) that saw Leinster's "De Profundis."

Also, Joel Townsley Rogers' "Through the Blackboard" and N. R. de Mexico's "The

(Continued on page 10)

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*E. N. J., New York



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THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 8)

Devil's Fiddle," which appeared in TWS (June, 1943), should have won some sort of a rating in ye Sarge's book. He is omitting mention of recent issues on the premise that you haven't yet caught up with them. He'd appreciate hearing from you anon in a critical sense on Jerry Shelton's "Devils from Darkonia," Leinster's "Things Pass By" and Kuttner's "Sword of Tomorrow," all of which you should have read by now. They seem worthy of mention.

But enough of looking backwards, my troglodytes. Let us crack out the Xeno-filled crystal ball and gaze bemused through its blistering fumes at what lies ahead for all faithful little pee-lots, kiwis and astrogators who reach the newsstand in time to purchase our next issue. So . . .

OUR NEXT ISSUE

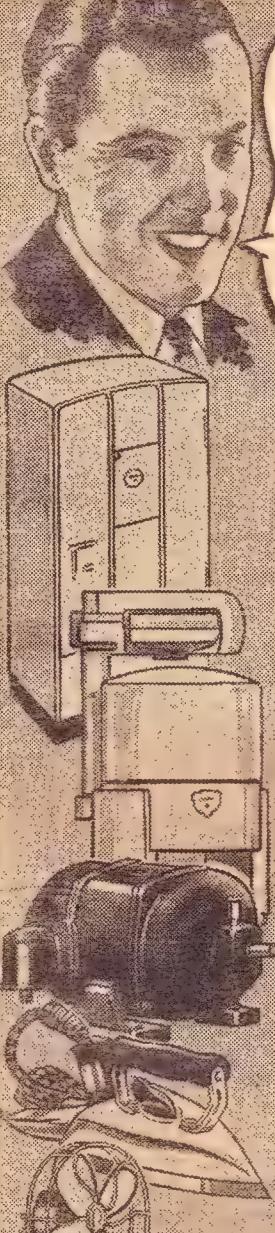
JOHN RUSSELL FEARN, the noted British science-fiction writer, has the full-length novel which leads the magazine for June with **THE MULTILLIONTH CHANCE**. We all have some idea of what happens when we get lucky enough to hit a long-shot daily double on the nose or knock off seven straight numbers at roulette or run a shoestring into a fortune with straight naturals at the dice table or draw successfully to an inside straight flush at poker—well, if we don't know personally, we've dreamed of some such break.

A solid streak of such miraculous luck can break a gambling house or force a bookmaker to hit for the hinterlands—and when something even more amazing occurs in the world of science anything can happen. And so that sterling young American laboratory genius, Grant Mayson, literally plucks a girl from another cosmic eon out of the ether. **THE MULTILLIONTH CHANCE** is one of the most brilliant and thoughtful time-space novels we have had the opportunity to read.

Murray Leinster, in super-pseudo-scientific form (there's a phrase for a xeno-rad-dled tongue to roll around, Froggo! S.S.) will be on hand with a novelet entitled **POCKET UNIVERSES**, which should cause columnar repercussions for issues to come. Delving deep into theorem and corollary, he has evolved an inventor with a gadget which simply wipes out space in an area both limited and limitless simultaneously.

As if this were not enough for one story, Leinster puts it to use in an ingenious political-personal story which will have most of you on the rims of your chairs. This is a yarn which should please both heavy and

(Continued on page 99)



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I am a mechanic for the Western Union Telegraph Co. Three days a week reading the lessons in refrigeration and earned the exact cost of the course.—**Henry S. Lee, Washington, D. C.**

I work day times at the shipyard and after 4:00 P.M. I operate from my cellar and garage. I average \$10.00 to \$15.00 clear every day.—**Walter Hanby, Brockton, Mass.**

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Clutching at the bars of the cage was a tall bearded figure

TITAN OF THE JUNGLE

By STANTON A. COBLENTZ

A mysterious fluid of enlightenment reverses the order of the world—and only Mark Haverside and the Pembrooks, armed with slingshots and courage, can set things right!

CHAPTER I

The Mysterious Village

FROM the moment when they reached the little town of Poonga, deep among the gold coast jungles, Jeff and Laura Pembrook knew that they were in for an adventure.

Yet it was not love of adventure that had brought them to the sleepy little settlement, with its rubber and cocoa plantations, and its farms sprawled over the densely grown mountainside. They had been married in New York three weeks before, and had thought that it would be great fun to spend their honeymoon among these exotic sur-

A STARTLING COMPLETE NOVEL

roundings, far from the intrusion of spying eyes.

When the invitation had come from Pembrook's old college chum Mark Haverside, the lure had been too great to resist.

"Drop in here, the pair of you," Mark had written. "There's plenty of room. I'll show you a whale of a time. Also, I've made one or two discoveries that will open your eyes."

The last remark referred, of course, to the experiments which Haverside was performing on jungle plants and animals in the laboratory he had set up near Poonga. It had been a grief to all his friends when, two years before, he had announced his intention of going to Africa for the purpose of conducting biological investigations with the aid of a small inherited fortune.

But Jeff Pembrook, himself a scientist, had recognized that his friend's unique genius would put the opportunity to good use. Yet surely the last thing he or Laura expected was the reception awaiting them upon their arrival at Poonga.

As they approached the village, jogging along the mountain trail from a larger village, eighteen miles away, they could sense that something was amiss. Their first misgivings had come when Haverside had failed to meet them at the train.

"Seems sort of funny, doesn't it?" Pembrook told his wife. "But what the heck's the difference?" He had tried to shrug the matter off philosophically. "Chances are old Mark's so deep in an experiment he forgot the day of the week. We'll have to hire a guide."

But to hire a guide was not at all easy. At the mention of Poonga, the native boys either pretended they didn't understand or spat on the ground in disgust.

Finally, in return for what seemed an exorbitant fee, a wizened old black fellow with a donkey-shaped face, Carlos by name, agreed to lead the way to Haverside's place. Their baggage having been strapped upon the donkeys, they set out.

But as they drew near their destination, after a wearying journey, Carlos was growing increasingly uneasy. Time after time he paused, and stared at them anxiously. More than once he asked why they should visit that "den of devils."

WHEN they had come into sight of the low thatch huts, Carlos peremptorily demanded payment. Having stowed it away,

he did a hasty aboutface, and disappeared the way he had come.

"Say, what is this?" Pembrook said to Laura, astonishment glittering from his clear blue eyes. "Has everybody here gone crazy?"

"They're giving a pretty good imitation of it," she answered, with a shudder. "You'd think Poonga was haunted."

"Oh, well, these half-wits of natives—you know how superstitious they all are," Jeff Pembrook said, with a shrug. "What in thunder do we care, anyhow?"

Seeing her look up at him with a calm, confident light in her communicative agate-brown eyes, he knew that he could take all the world's eccentricities with a laugh, so long as she was at his side.

But had Carlos been merely eccentric? That was the question that leaped to both their minds when they rode into the African village. Rational moderns though they were, they could not help feeling a sense of weirdness as they glanced at hut after hut, and noticed they were all deserted. What made the situation uncanny was that the people had evidently left under sudden impulse. Cooking utensils lay about the huts in careless abandon; bunches of bananas hung from the walls, the half eaten and decaying fruit a mecca for flies. The playthings of children, the bright-colored shawls of the women, the tools of the men had been abandoned in that panic-stricken exodus.

"By heavens!" Pembrook commented, as he and his wife paused, bewildered and baffled. "There isn't a worker in sight on the plantations. Does it—well, to put it bluntly—does it look quite natural to you?"

"Not at all." Laura spoke reluctantly. "But what's got me worried is that we don't know how to find Mark. Didn't you say his place is a mile or two out of town?"

"Yes, devil take him! Why in the name of perdition couldn't he have met us, anyway? Why in—"

A screeching voice interrupted him. "Why in perdition! Devil take him!"

Turning in surprise, Jeff Pembrook saw a green parrot perched on the roof of one of the huts, cocking its head at them mockingly.

"Why in perdition—why in perdition!" reiterated the bird, in a taunting voice. "Why in perdition couldn't he have met us, anyway?"

The parrot's voice trailed off into a scream of laughter, and the creature flew away with heavily flapping wings. And Pembrook and



Mark Haverside held up an electric torch just as the glass tube struck the furious ape

Laura, turning to one another in amazement, could not convince themselves that they had heard an ordinary parrot.

A sense had come to them of unseen eyes watching them, unseen ears listening. High up among a tangle of palm and rubber trees, they did actually observe the long dangling limbs and grimacing face of a small monkey, which instantly vanished.

"You know, I could half believe the thing was spying on us," Laura confessed, with a forced laugh.

Even as she spoke, their eyes were caught by a flash of color.

Just overhead there flew a creature of dazzling beauty. Deep-green above and scarlet below, and with long trailing golden-green feathers, it was an apparition to startle any beholder. It was a gorgeous bird. Having drifted down in front of the astonished pair, it advanced toward the woods with slow, stately steps. Spontaneously they started toward it.

"Why, the poor thing's wounded," Laura murmured.

"At any rate, it wants us to follow," Pembrook declared, observing the curious way in which the creature kept glancing back over its shoulder, while uttering a peculiar cluck-ing.

"Fol-low, fol-low! Yes, fol-low!"

From somewhere among the trees that command had issued, in strange grunting half-human tones, though the speaker was unseen.

Meanwhile the bird continued to retreat, still clucking to lure the humans on.

"Fol-low—fol-low—yes, fol-low!" the voice continued, with the same odd accentuation.

It reminded them of a boorish foreigner wrestling with English.

"If that isn't the strangest thing ever," Pembrook remarked. "I knew Mark had some animals, but didn't suspect he had a whole trained menagerie."

"Yes, and they want to lead us into the woods. What if he's lying there hurt, Jeff, and needs help?"

"That doesn't explain why the whole village has decamped. However, at least it's a straw to clutch at."

BUT before going any further, Jeff Pembrook took the precaution of tying the donkeys to posts, and of taking out his rifle. Then, with Laura just behind him, set off

after the bird, whose brilliant green and red now shone at the jungle's edge. The woods, with their semi-darkness and their great creepers twining python-like about the limbs of monstrous trees, seemed grim and forbidding; but Pembrook did not hesitate, particularly since there was a good trail winding amid the undergrowth. Along that path the bird had preceded them, while from somewhere high among the trees the queer, half-human voice still ordered:

"Fol-low! Fol-low!"

They may have gone about a quarter of a mile when the bird disappeared in a thicket. From amid the shrubbery there came a sound that caused the intruders to stop short with startled gasps.

It was a groan—deep and hollow—as if uttered by a man in agony.

IN CONSTERNATION, Jeff Pembrook and Laura stared at one another, their worst suspicions confirmed.

Mark had met with an accident, and his trained animals were leading the way to the scene of the trouble.

Impulsively, not pausing to wonder at the unusual intelligence of the creatures, Pembrook started into the thicket. As he did so, a long black-and-orange slithering thing wound from just under his feet with a hiss. He started back barely in time to avoid the deadly fangs. But even before he could lift his rifle butt to strike, something rustled in the thicket to his left, and the crack of a gun rang out.

Springing back as the bullet struck a tree to his rear with a nasty twang, he searched the shadows in vain. But Laura, choking a half-born scream, tugged at his arms furiously.

"It wasn't—it wasn't a man!" she wailed, trying to draw him away. "I saw it! It had long hairy arms—a chest like a bull."

"Nonsense, Laura, it's just your nerves. You're simply imagining things."

This was what he intended to say, when he felt a clutch as of twenty arms rolled into one, and something snatched at his rifle from behind.

As the weapon was plucked from his grasp, he wheeled about just in time to see a dark form fading into the greenery.

Simultaneously, from somewhere in the thicket, there came a peal of something like laughter, and yet strangely unlike laughter—a hoarse, rolling, inhuman howl.

CHAPTER II

His Majesty, The Ape

WITH that bestial laughter still ringing in their ears, they stole warily back, crouching low on the jungle trail to avoid detection. It was evident that there was some sort of a plot against them. The gaudily plumed bird had been a decoy. Even the parrot had participated in the conspiracy. The unknown speaker in the treetops, the groan in the woods, and the seizure of the rifle all fitted into the same picture of some hostile force playing with them for its own amusement.

There was only one thing to do, they decided, and that was to hurry to the nearest town for help, for how could they battle with the mysterious menace, without weapons to aid them?

But upon reaching Poonga, they met with another shock.

"By gosh, where are the donkeys?" Jeff cried, in stunned surprise, as he gazed down the narrow village street.

The animals, which had been hitched in plain view, were no longer to be seen!

Parts of their ropes, Jeff Pembrook noticed, were still tied to the posts. But the hemp had been cut as by a knife—or rather, to judge from the jaggedness of the incisions, as if by sharp teeth. Worst of all, their baggage was also gone.

By this time a faint rose-glow was visible about the black triangle of a volcanic cone to the west, to signalize the approach of the rapid tropical nightfall.

"Isn't it the devil's own luck?" Pembrook muttered. "There's nothing to do, Laura, but make ourselves comfortable for the night in one of these shacks. Let's hope that by morning things'll right themselves somehow."

But inwardly he was far from confident. The loss of the baggage troubled him less than did the thought of the foe who, he was certain, was trailing their every step.

That night was one they would long remember. It was a night of sleeplessness, in which they took turns standing guard; or lay huddled together, planning the morning's escape, while listening to the hoots, screeches and howls from all around them. Both Jeff and Laura had armed themselves with clubs.

Both were as much surprised as relieved when the dawn arrived without attack.

"If we can't find those donkeys mighty soon, we'll have to get back to Mambu on foot," he pointed out. "Eighteen miles through the ups and downs of these jungles, and we not even sure of the trail—well, it will be something to test our mettle. Are you game, Laura?"

"I'm game," she said, looking up at him with resolution in her expressive big dark eyes.

For breakfast they helped themselves to some bananas that hung in a great bunch from the ceiling of their hut. But hardly had they finished when they were startled by a rumbling from outside. Jeff Pembrook, seizing his club, glanced out, and almost dropped the weapon in his astonishment.

Rattling toward them, along the village street, was a rude two-wheeled cart.

Surely, in the vague twilight, Jeff Pembrook's senses were deceiving him! Surely, that could not be a pair of donkeys that, heehawing and gesturing, sat in the cart, holding the reins! And, surely, those four creatures drawing the vehicle—they could not be men!

But they were men—four white men!

Straight on and on the cart came crunching. The harnessed men passed the door without noticing Jeff or Laura Pembrook, their eyes shaded by blinders, their expression that of old nags. Then high over their heads a whip cracked. The lash snapped on their shoulders. Wincing, they hastened their pace, while the eyes of their donkey masters were arrogant and yet gleeful, with an intelligence beyond that of any beasts the beholders had ever seen before.

Stunned, Jeff and Laura exchanged glances. Then, an irresistible curiosity mastering their alarm, they went trailing after the queer team.

But they were not reassured to hear a parrot screeching from somewhere amid the palm trees, in a voice of shrill laughter.

"O-bey us, men!" it cried. "O-bey! O-bey! O-bey! Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Reaching the village outskirts, they forgot all about the cart in observing a still more extraordinary sight.

In a wide cleared space, a dozen men and women—this time Gold Coast natives—were tethered by ropes and chains to stakes in the ground. Each held a tool—a spade, a hoe or a shovel—and was digging with dull, dogged

movements, as of a drugged person. At one side stood two horses, who nipped them whenever their efforts seemed to lag. And the manner of the beasts, as they moved about with flicking tails and blazing eyes, was one of mastery.

In horrible fascination, Jeff Pembrook and Laura watched the scene, and beheld in amazement a big ape who sat at the forest edge, fondling a creature that might have been a pet cat or dog, but which proved to be a naked human—a baby!

BUT now their attention was distracted by a howl from the opposite end of the clearing. From the brush there crashed a figure nearly six feet tall, black-haired, barrel-chested, with powerful long drooping arms and a ridged, scarred face—a superb specimen of a male gorilla in its prime. In one hand he swung a club, which came down in a succession of thumps upon the bare, blood-streaked backs of two natives, whom he caught by their leather dog-collars and flung to earth whenever they made any move to escape.

Only the ape's preoccupation with these wretches prevented him from seeing Jeff and Laura as they slipped quietly into the woods. Nevertheless—of this they were afterwards persuaded—their presence was known, their movements had been followed, and the dread master of the jungle was merely playing with them for his own amusement. Had it not been for the arrival of an unexpected ally, their chances would have been those of a mouse in a trap.

They had not gone many hundreds of yards along the tangled trail when they realized that, in their haste, they had strayed from the path. In attempting to retrace their steps, they became lost in a labyrinth. Green walls of ferns, vines and underbrush confronted them wherever they went, so that their anxiety gradually increased to alarm.

It was in an effort to prevent alarm from turning to panic that Jeff drew Laura down beside him on a mossy fallen treetrunk.

"Best think things out calmly," he proposed, brushing off a handful of biting ants, while noticing how drawn and white his wife's sensitive features had grown. "Fate's just laughing up her sleeve at us and we've got to fight our way through. If we can only find that trail—we'll be all right."

"Jeff—what's that?" Laura cried, springing to her feet.

Leaping to her side, he clutched his stick tightly.

Auzzling sound came to them from the thicket, a faint rustling and crunching. But neither a leopard nor a man-sized ape sprang at them out of the brush. Instead, they heard a faint "Wuff—wuff!" and a furry blue-gray face emerged. An Australian sheep-dog, its tail wagging furiously, darted toward them out of the shadows.

At a glance, the observers knew that this was no ordinary dog. There was about it an indefinable air of intelligence, beyond anything they had observed in any canine before. Its brown-speckled bluish eyes: hone with a knowing light that was all but human, while the large V-shaped white mark on its forehead enhanced its distinctive appearance.

Though obviously very friendly, it would allow Jeff Pembrook to waste no time petting it. Having sniffed at his legs, as if to identify him, it opened its mouth and deposited a wad of paper at his feet, then looked up at him as if saying, "Take this! Take this!"

Jeff seized the wad, unfolded it; and received one of the surprises of his life.

Scrawled in pencil on some sheets torn from a pocket note-book, illegible in places because of the action of the dog's saliva and yet clear enough on the whole, was a jerkily written message in a familiar handwriting:

Jeff,

For God's sake, come and get me out of this hell on earth. Trim's nose will take him to you and Laura for he knows your scent from the smell of your letters. Follow him; trust him absolutely. He will elude Titan, who has his nets all about us. Please hurry! I can't write more, or the keepers—"

At this point several words were undecipherable, but the ending was distinct enough:

Forlornly—Mark.

Even as Jeff read this letter, Trim nudged at his leg as if to say, "Come, come!"

A moment later, almost before Laura had had time to read the scribbled document or to wonder at its contents, the two humans, crouching low, were following the dog through the jungle.

No trained scout could have led the way more astutely than Trim. Twisting and turning through the underbrush, he kept away from all regular trails, and yet was careful to avoid the most tangled spots, so that the two humans, though scratched and torn, were able to follow him.

ONCE, with warning snarls and growls, he drove them back from a coiling thing that they had mistaken, in the dimness, for the twisted limb of a tree; once he led them through the waters of a small stream, breaking their trail in case of pursuit; several times he stood stockstill, listening, sniffing, and bristling.

"My glory," Laura murmured, after observing him for some time. "He's as smart as any man."

"A lot smarter than most," Jeff agreed.

Trim glanced back as if understanding every word. The gleam in his eyes almost seemed a smile.

Blood-streaked by thorns and insect bites, mud-soaked, sweating, and weary, they followed their guide for more than an hour. At last, creeping forward with ears cocked, Trim approached an open place on a hillside.

But when, in their eagerness, they hastened their footsteps, his expression cautioned them as clearly as words:

"Take care! Take care!"

Indeed, there was need of care, as they discovered when, reaching the edge of the clearing, they looked down upon a little valley.

A long sprawling thatched house, with several rude outhouses, stared up at them from a distance of two hundred yards. What chiefly caught their attention was the structure to the rear of the main building. It was a barred place about twelve feet square and ten feet high—a cage for some large animal. The contents of that cage caused them to cry out in amazement.

Clutching at the bars, the image of desolation, was a tall bearded figure, dressed in white linen coat and trousers!

"Heaven help us," Jeff muttered, "If it doesn't look like—"

But he didn't finish the sentence. The man had begun to wave frantically.

Strangely, amid their excitement, instinctively they had kept their voices down. Even the figure in the cage, for all his frenzied gesticulations, did not call out after one hastily muffled exclamation. But it seemed to Jeff and Laura that they broke all sprinting records in reaching the cage.

Arriving breathless, a little ahead of Laura, Jeff Pembrook clutched madly at the bars.

Titan approached Mark Haverside and emitted a roar of exultation as he looked at his helpless victim



"Mark—Mark!" Pembrook whispered. "Is it you, Mark?" One of his hands shot into the cage to clasp that of the prisoner.

Mark Haverside obviously had suffered. With his long lean scholar's face looking pale and cadaverous, his hollow eyes burning with a sepulchral light, his long coppery hair disheveled and his clothes streaked with clotted blood and dirt, he made anything but an attractive sight. Yet there was a feverish joy in his expression as he clung to Jeff Pembrook's hand. He appeared unwilling to release his hold even when Laura had come up.

At one glance, Pembrook had taken in the details of the cage—the swinging trapeze, the bare rock floor, the pool of muddy water, the bunch of rotting bananas, the half decayed pineapple at one end, and the padlocked door.

"What in perdition, old fellow, has happened?" Jeff Pembrook blurted out.

The captive's eyes were grim and ironic. "See for yourself. Cage I made for my trained gorilla, Titan. Was going to experiment on him. The laugh's on me, I guess. It's he that did the experimenting! I've been here three weeks already, would you believe it? Three ages in hell!"

"But now it'll be all right," Laura promised, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Now we'll get you out. We must!"

"Maybe you think so. You don't know this cage. Had it made double strong, blasted idiot that I was! Special fool-proof lock, too, so those inquisitive natives wouldn't tamper. Even a professional safe-cracker couldn't pick it. As for these bars, well, if a gorilla couldn't smash them, how could I? But you'd both better watch out. When the guard comes back, run like the devil."

Pembrook noticed how anxious, and with what a hunted expression, Mark Haverside's eyes were ranging the clearing. He also observed how Trim, nose to the ground and ears pricked up alertly, was prowling near the edge of the woods, on the outlook for enemies.

"However, he doesn't usually show up this early in the day," Haverside went on, rapidly, and with a faintly sardonic tone, as Jeff Pembrook, trying the locks of the cage, saw that they were impregnable. "Better let me get on with my story, before one of those four-footed devils comes back."

"Yes, do," Laura said quickly. "How did it happen?"

"Remember how I came down here to conduct experiments," Haverside said. "Par-

ticularly animal experiments. Collected some of the local monkeys, parrots, and other fauna. One day, having gone to a seaport, Takoradi, for supplies, I bought some monkeys and baboons, and also several chimpanzees, and the gorilla, Titan, which was carried in a cage."

"Was Titan so dangerous?" Laura wanted to know.

HAVERSIDE grimaced. "Dangerous? Wait till you see him. Still, he'd have been all right with a decent upbringing. As a youngster he was full of fun—mascot of the animal collector, and joy of the keepers down there. But one of the natives got a grudge against the animal collector and, for revenge, emptied a fire extinguisher full of nitric acid into Titan's face, leaving him for dead. Strange to say, the poor brute survived, but with a horribly scarred face. And something inside him was scarred too. Ever since he's been ruled by a murderous hatred of the human race. Can't exactly blame him, either!"

"Still, that doesn't explain about you and this cage," Jeff Pembrook pointed out.

"Doesn't it? Then listen, and see if it doesn't!"

Mark Haverside clutched at the bars, and shook them fiercely, as if thus to break his way to freedom.

"First let me tell about the two inventions I'd made," he said. "Worked at them two years, fool that I was. One I called the Depression Fluid. It's a powerful drug with a cocaine base, which slows down or checks the activities of the brain and nervous system, blacking out large areas of the cerebrum, and making the victim docile, dull-witted, apathetic."

Jeff nodded. "In a word, changing him into a dolt?"

"Exactly. But the other invention, which I call the Fluid of Enlightenment, has the opposite effect. As you know, there are vast areas of the brain of man and the higher animals which are never put to use. The Fluid of Enlightenment causes them to be utilized, enormously expanding the powers of reasoning and understanding."

"You mean, it turns a numbskull to a genius?"

"Well, not quite—but almost." Mark Haverside waved his hand toward the sheepdog. "For example, look at Trim there! Isn't he as far beyond an ordinary dog as an ordinary dog is beyond a mole?"

Trim, as if understanding what was said, came trotting up. He stuck his head through the bars to lick Mark's hand, then resumed his self-imposed sentry duty.

"So you tried this Enlightenment Fluid on your animals?"

Haverside groaned. His face was wrinkled into as wry an expression as Jeff Pembrook and Laura had ever seen on any human countenance.

"Yes, I tried the Enlightenment Fluid on my animals," he said. "And now, heaven help me, I'm paying for my imbecility!"

CHAPTER III

Beasts as Masters

MARK HAVERSIDE paused for a moment as if to regain control of his emotions. But in his voice there had been a deep undertone of despair which filled both Jeff and Laura Pembrook with apprehension and fear. They had an inkling of what was coming, but their reason rejected it. They stared at the caged scientist, their eyes wide with horror.

"What did you do, Mark?" Pembrook whispered.

A blue and red macaw flew past the cage with a jeering screech.

"Before testing the darned stuff on human beings, I thought I'd see how it worked on animals and birds," Haverside groaned. "The first I injected was Trim, the three-year-old pal that came with me from the States. I don't need to say any more about what it's done for him. I had equal success with some parrots and macaws, also with monkeys, baboons and chimpanzees. At the same time, I tried the Depression Fluid on a few beasts. It worked like a charm, too. Soon afterward I made my idiotic mistake."

Haverside spat out disgustedly, clutched the bars more tightly, and resumed.

"I tried enlightening Titan," he said. "Ah, but I should have known better! It took my assistant Hal Graham and me half a day of manipulation to inject the fluid into the ape's arm without risking our necks. But we were so curious to see the effect we just wouldn't say quits. Well, we saw, all right."

The speaker paused long enough to range back and forth across his cage. Then he

paused, his fingers fluttering excitedly.

"Don't know as I should go on talking," he said. "Can't help suspecting Titan may be sneaking up on us, even if it's not his usual time." He cast a wary glance around him. "Now you'd better go, folks, while there's a chance. Follow Trim, and for gosh sake, bring me help."

But Jeff and Laura, absorbed in the recital, were confident that Trim's keen senses would warn them of Titan's approach. They believed poor Mark Haverside was suffering an attack of nerves.

"Well, strangely enough the Fluid didn't seem to make much difference to Titan at first," the prisoner continued. "That was where Graham and I went wrong. Titan was so blamed clever he pretended to be the same animal as before, and bided his time. Thus he caught us off guard. I'm convinced now he was in secret touch with the chimpanzees and other super-intelligent devils, planning the coup. It all went off with the precision of a pre-arranged plot."

"Then he caught you napping?" Pembrook asked.

"No, not napping—sound asleep at the switch! It was all so simple it makes me almost laugh at myself. From time to time I had to go into Titan's cage, to change the water, remove food remains, and clean up. But Hal Graham always stood outside with a revolver, just in case the beast got nasty. Well, one morning, I heard Hal let out a howl. I turned around and what in blazes do you think I saw? Graham been set upon from behind by two chimpanzees, Spice and Spider, either of them more than a match for a man. And Spice had Hal's revolver."

"What!" Laura gasped. "You didn't let those chimps run around loose?"

"Why not? They were always as amiable as pet dogs. I hadn't suspected how that cursed fluid would change them, making them suddenly realize they could be masters instead of slaves. Heavens, what an awakening I had!"

"Wasn't there anything you could do?" Laura Pembrook asked.

"What could I do? You haven't any idea how fast it was done. Naturally, I started to Hal Graham's rescue. But I hadn't gone one yard when something grabbed me by the collar and flung me across the cage like a bean-bag. Next thing I knew, the steel door had closed with a sickening click. And Titan was outside, taking the key from the lock.

Then what a howl of laughter! He looked in, his whole form shaking, and I thought he never would get over his amusement."

Pembrook shuddered. "It wasn't amusing for you."

"No, nor for Hal either. In no time at all, those two chimps had him bound tighter than a clam. Then Titan performed a little operation. They had some of the Depression Fluid, stolen from my laboratory, the fiends! Titan injected it into Hal Graham's veins. This left the poor devil duller than a donkey. He's been taking orders from them ever since."

At this information, a light broke over Jeff and Laura. Now they understood about the persons slaving for the animals or dragging them around in a cart. They all were victims of the Depression Fluid.

Haverside confirmed their suspicions.

"The beasts have ransacked the countryside," he said. "They've been seizing and depressing people. Those who haven't fled have all been captured. Similarly, they've injected the Enlightenment Fluid into hundreds of birds and animals, wild and domestic, until now they have an army ranged against us. They've taken all the country hereabouts, with men doing all their work; and the revolution will keep on spreading. They've enslaved four of my Portuguese servants and made them pull a cart. They're so abominably keen they know how to use the firearms they've stolen. Also, they can speak some words of English, crudely, but understandably. Titan boasts of his triumphs."

"How comes it they haven't used the Depression Fluid on you?" Pembrook inquired. "You don't show any effects of it."

Mark Haverside laughed bitterly. "No, not yet. Spice was going to depress me, but Titan interfered. Not out of love for me, I'm sure. Can't quite figure out his reason, but there was a gleam in his eye showing he's got some devilish scheme in his head."

With a sigh, Haverside stopped short and a brooding silence descended. A buzzard, swooping low on circling black wings, cast an enormous shadow. It was Laura that broke the dismal spell.

"But Trim?" she asked. "How about Trim? Why do the animals permit him to be with you?"

"So far as I can make out, they haven't discovered that he's for us. He's too clever to let them see. And probably it has never occurred to them that any animal would take sides with me."

At this moment Trim had come bounding toward them. With short excited barks, he ran from Jeff to Laura, and back from Laura to Jeff, then started toward the jungle, still barking in a suppressed, agitated way.

"Better go, quick!" Mark Haverside urged.

JEFF and Laura Pembrook had reached through the bars and seized their friend's hands in a firm, hasty clasp.

"For my sake, don't forget!" the scientist whispered hastily. "Go for help at once. You don't know what they're threatening—"

He was cut short by a howl from the woods, a heavy, unearthly, resonant sound, halfway between a bark and a roar. It was accompanied by a ferocious thumping, as of a hollow body being pounded by a heavy instrument.

Following Trim, the visitors had darted away through the deep grass toward the jungle. And Jeff Pembrook, glancing back, saw Haverside slumping down upon the cage floor, his face buried in his hands.

At the same time, that giant voice still belied from the wilderness, more savage than before. Hardly had the fugitives slipped from sight when a huge-chested, glowering, black-haired creature emerged, an eight-foot club uplifted in one hand, and a rifle clutched in the other.

Behind him swarmed a crowd of chimpanzees, baboons and monkeys, attended by horses, burros, peccaries and other four-legged things, while parrots, buzzards and other fowl flew screaming ahead of him in a feathered bodyguard.

Resting his club and rifle upon the ground, the gorilla paused to beat powerfully upon his chest with his two clenched fists; then, still howling, continued on his crouching way toward Haverside's cage.

Titan had miscalculated in one respect only. Not until much later did Jeff and Laura Pembrook learn how he had been playing with them for his own amusement before closing the trap; how he had encircled them, filling the woods with his agents, so that escape appeared to be impossible.

Guarding every trail, and at regular intervals between, were some of the gorilla's four-footed followers or human agents, who docilely obeyed commands. Certainly, no human beings, with only the normal senses of their species, could have ferreted a way through the net.

The miscalculation was concerned with

Trim. Never had Titan anticipated how a dog would lead the fugitives through the undergrowth; how he would scent every enemy before the enemy scented him, and twist off in a new direction; how he would risk his life, time after time, to save his charges.

Once, for example, Trim leaped up in full view of a company of depressed humans, leading them off while Jeff and Laura Pembrook escaped. And once they had come face to face with the chimpanzee, Spider. He had them at bay with a revolver, and Trim had charged the ape, grappled with him, seized him by the throat, and, with Pembrook's aid, disarmed him.

Every now and then, as they made their way through the woods, they had a glimpse of what they jestingly called Titan's "new order." There were the super-intelligent baboons who rode on the shoulders of depressed men, driving them with whips, as a mounted man drives a horse.

There were the stupefied humans who ran to obey the monkeys' whistling summons like a pack of well trained hounds, and groveled face to ground, fondling the legs of their simian masters. Or they would fight with one another for the scraps of nuts and bananas contemptuously hurled at them.

Then there was the great long-beaked bird that kept pecking at a man's neck and scolding him, while the man dutifully built a nest for the fowl. There was also a wild boar that sat in snorting lordship beside a stream, jabbing a man with his great snout, while the slave dug with bare bleeding hands for roots to feed the beast.

With these object lessons before them, Jeff and Laura Pemberton agreed that they would die sooner than be taken prisoners. But thanks to Trim, no extreme measures were necessary. Due to the skill of the sheepdog

they pierced the enemy's defenses in their weakest part and, winding through the jungle, made the eighteen miles to Mambu by a route forty miles long.

Except for Trim's keenness in catching small animals, and in bringing Jeff and Laura wild fruits and berries their own senses would not have detected, they would not have had the strength for that gruelling three-day trek.

Reaching Mambu in rags, their bodies covered with sores and scratches, they found the houses empty, the fields forsaken, and the whole place almost deserted. Only one or two doddering old crones remained, from whom they could get but the vaguest of explanations.

"Witchcraft," they said to the Pembrooks. "Devils get into animals. Animals make witchcraft, catch many people. Everybody else run."

This was the most lucid explanation Jeff Pembrook received. However, it was enough to prove the extent of Titan's depredations. Already he was conquering and enslaving the whole region!

WEAK with relief, they boarded a train at Kumasi and found themselves and Trim on the way to the city of Accra. There, they felt sure, they would be able to arm themselves, find companions to put down the insurrection and to rescue Mark Haverside.

But here fate again took a hand. A tropical fever, contracted during those harrowing days in the jungle, put both Jeff and Laura Pembrook flat on their backs soon after their arrival in the city. For weeks they lay tossing in the hospital, while Trim, fed and housed by the attendants, frequently visited them, pleading with them to hurry and get well by

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means of his expressive eyes and his sighs and whimperings.

Never a day passed now—hardly a waking hour—when the patients did not appeal to the nurses and doctors and to all chance visitors. Over and over again they told of the uprising of the animals, and begged for an expedition to set forth to aid the victims. But every one listened with pitying smiles, construing these words as mere fever-born ravings.

Thus several weeks dragged past, while Jeff and Laura Pembroke groaned less from their illness than at the thought of Mark Haverside still languishing in a cage.

At length, when they were convalescent, they heard that a party of American scientists was in town, on their way to conduct geological field work in the vicinity, and Jeff Pembroke contrived, through one of his nurses, to get a message to them. As a result, he was visited by Dr. Harlan Crandall, the famous paleontologist, who listened with absorbed interest.

Convinced of Pembroke's sincerity, Crandall agreed to investigate the story, in company with three confreres, Dr. Bryce Rushmore and Professors Ellery D. Stone and Lloyd Worthington.

The plan, as hastily sketched, was for them to go armed not only with rifles, but with tear-gas, hand grenades, and other weapons.

They were to take the train to Kumasi, and then, guided by Trim, they would cover the distance to the lair of Titan on foot. The scientists did not doubt that, thus equipped, they could put down the rebellion without difficulty. Jeff Pembroke, for his own part, was not quite so certain. Yet what pained him most of all was the thought that he was still too weak to join them. But time was precious and they could not keep Mark Haverside waiting any longer.

So the party left Accra with the air of men going on a lark. Jeff and Laura resigned themselves to an excruciating period of waiting. Within a week, at most, they should have word. But a week went by, and brought no tidings.

Ten days wore past, two weeks—and still no news.

Jeff, released at last from the hospital, was wild-eyed with anxiety. Had Crandall and his companions been captured? Had Trim too been taken or slain?

Half beside himself, Jeff Pembroke taxed his still limited strength trying to organize another expedition, but without success.

Then, on the sixteenth day, an amazing event occurred.

A bedraggled blue-gray dog, its body a mass of caked mire and scratches, a ragged, partly healed wound on its left flank, its ribs sticking out of its sides and its tongue lolling from its panting mouth, came loping through the streets of Accra, straight to the hospital where Jeff and Laura Pembroke had been confined.

An attendant recognized the animal, and led him to the nearby lodgings of the Pembrooks who greeted him with joy and relief.

"Trim!" Pembroke cried. "Trim! What's happened to you, boy?"

The sheepdog leaped upward and tried to lick Pembroke's face. "Where's Crandall? Good heavens, what's happened to Crandall?"

At the mention of that name, the animal's eyes took on a look of unmistakable sorrow; and a sound like a groan came from his throat.

"How—for mercy's sake—did you ever get here?" Laura asked. "Why, it must be two or three hundred miles!"

"Most likely he's been on the way all this while," Jeff said, eying the dog. "He's come to say we've got to go ourselves to rescue Mark. Is that it, Trim?"

In answer, the dog's tail wagged violently.

"Yes, we've got to go ourselves," Jeff said. "How in creation we can manage it is more than I know. But we've got to find a way."

Trim's tail still was furiously wagging; while Laura Pemberton, hastening to the cupboard, drew forth a chunk of meat for the starving animal.

Having consumed this offering, Trim immediately started toward the door.

"Come at once," his eloquent bright eyes seemed to say. "Come—before it is too late!"

CHAPTER IV

Titan Ordains

A T A careless slouching gait, Titan came sauntering down the hill. A crownless straw hat, perched crookedly over his head and shading his eyes with its wide slanting brim, gave him a rakish appearance. This was accentuated by the devil-may-care manner in which he swung a rifle in one hand.

As he paused before the cage at the base of

the hill and stared in at his captive, there was a smiling satisfaction on his heavy lips.

"Man-beast," he rumbled, in a thick voice that was barely understandable. "I come. We talk."

It was by no means the first time that Haverside had heard the gorilla express himself in a sort of English. The creature, with his quick intelligence, had made regular visits to the cage and insisted on being taught. Mark, hoping to be able to influence him favorably, had leaped at the opportunity, with the reward of finding an apt pupil.

This, however, appeared to be his only reward. For the sullen light in Titan's brooding little black eyes was as unfriendly as ever. Today, indeed, he appeared particularly surly.

"Man-beast, down on your knees!" he commanded.

Too well Mark knew what this meant. There was no way out. Once he had refused to kneel and he still bore the bruises of the stones Titan had hurled in through the cage-bars.

Great was the glee of the ape as Haverside morosely did his bidding.

"Long time you put us down," the giant ape said. "You boss, we mind you. Now we put you down." Titan laughed, as he jabbed his rifle-butt between the bars, poking his victim painfully in the ribs.

The man groaned, but made no other response.

"When you ever do me good, man-beast?" the gorilla went on, forgetting his laughter, and beginning to beat an angry tattoo on his lower ribs with both fists. "You give me cage—shut me up. You hit me. Hurt me. Every man-beast laugh. Now you not laugh. I more big. More strong. I show!"

For several minutes the chest-beating continued, growing constantly louder and fiercer. Then, with a snarl, the gorilla seized a key which hung on a chain about his neck, inserting it in the cage-lock, and swung the door open.

As the giant ape entered the cage, Haverside instinctively retreated, but his withdrawl was like that of a trapped rat. In a moment, he felt the huge arms closing about him and, helpless as a babe, found himself being lugged outside.

Little as he had liked the cage, the bars now seemed a haven of refuge as, with the powerful hands crushing into him until his muscles ached, he was borne off toward his

former laboratory.

"You not be scared," counseled the ape, in a booming voice that was far from reassuring. "You not die yet. Not if you mind me."

Straight into the laboratory Haverside was hauled and was surprised to find the place not greatly changed. The chimpanzee Spice lay curled up, cozily slumbering on a large table. Broken glass covered the floor where a window had been knocked out to let in more light. Otherwise, all was as before.

"You help me," Titan muttered, after releasing his victim. He pointed to several vials formerly filled with the Fluid of Enlightenment and the Depression Fluid. Mark Haverside noted that but a small quantity of either remained. Quick comprehension came to him as Titan waved a mighty paw.

"See bottles," he said. "They have magic water. No other man-beast make magic water. So you make it. Fill all bottles."

Vainly Haverside stared about him, looking for an avenue of escape.

"Why me save you?" Titan thundered. "Why me not put magic water in you—make head like worm, way I do other man-beast? I want you make magic water!"

The mystery became clear. So this was why the gorilla had not depressed him, as had been done with all the other humans. Mark Haverside was to retain his intelligence, because he was the only man on earth who had the secret of the Depression and Enlightenment Fluids—the only man who could manufacture new supplies to increase Titan's conquests over mankind.

"You make magic water—right now!" instructed the gorilla, leaning over the slave with one arm threateningly outstretched.

Automatically Haverside moved toward the vials. He knew that he must not obey, and thereby betray other men into captivity. Yet to refuse would be to doom himself to a cruel death.

Not that life had much value for Haverside now, but he did wish to live to have a hand in Titan's overthrow. Also, was there not a hope that if he held out, Jeff and Laura Pembrook would come back with a rescuing party? True, they were much overdue, so much so that he had tortured himself to conjecture what had happened to them.

AT TIMES he feared they had been captured, as Titan had boasted, but he had never quite believed that story, since the ape had given no tangible proof. In any case, if

he could but put off the crisis, perhaps it could be avoided altogether.

So he moved toward the vials, as if with no thought but to obey.

"Beware, man-beast," threatened the gorilla, his jaws opening wide as if to snap and bite. "Mind me, or I make you sorry."

By way of a hint, Titan's open hand came down on Mark's back like a battering ram.

"Try not get away," the gorilla went on, with a growl. "Many eyes watch!"

Surely enough, a chimpanzee or a baboon was posted at every door and window. Even if Haverside could have escaped from the building—unlikely as that appeared—how long would it be before he was recaptured?

There was only one possibility: to pretend to yield. Meanwhile he must secretly scheme to circumvent the tyrant. Oh, if only Jeff and Laura were not so slow about arriving with their rescuers!

But as Mark Haverside set to work, he knew that he could not delay indefinitely. Actually, he could have made both fluids in less than an hour but, thanks to innumerable waste motions, he might prolong the process for a day or two. But hardly longer, in view of the angry impatience with which Titan every now and then returned to the laboratory, demanding to know if the two preparations were ready.

NEVERTHELESS, Haverside had conceived a plan to thwart the oppressor. It would involve great personal risk. He also had thought up another plan which might lead to his eventual escape.

There was a smile of sardonic satisfaction on his face when, after forty-eight hours, both fluids were ready and the gorilla tested them on two parrots. The immediate display of vivacity and increased intelligence by the one bird, and of dullness and dejection by the other, showed the drugs to have been properly made.

"Good," Titan grunted, a faint smile showing as his thick lips drew back from his powerful teeth. "I thought maybe you try fool. Then you sorry. You very sorry."

So Haverside was rewarded with several bananas flung him by his master and was kept in the laboratory to manufacture still more of the fluids.

For safety's sake, and lest his ruse be detected prematurely, Haverside could not attempt to carry out his first plan just yet. When the time was ripe, he would not

hesitate, although if detected, he need expect no more mercy than a fly, caught on sticky paper.

But little could Mark Haverside have foreseen the consequences of his scheme.

IT WAS two days later when, still laboring in the laboratory, he noticed signs of intense excitement all about him.

Titan had just come lumbering in, when a rear door burst open and a chimpanzee ran forward, and mumbled in an incomprehensible jargon.

Instantly the gorilla's eyes blazed with a ferocious light. He beat a loud rhythm of rage against his chest, and let forth a roar that could have been heard a mile. Then he snapped out some hurried orders, which Haverside likewise could not understand. Thereupon several apes and monkeys dashed out in wild haste. Some parrots and other birds flew off into the woods, screaming with excitement. Two chimpanzees, seizing long coils of rope which Haverside had kept in the laboratory for experiments on the animals, darted out to join the others.

Being still under heavy guard, Haverside could not follow. He could only surmise what was happening. From time to time he heard shouts, howls and screeches from the woods, accompanied—or so he imagined—by sounds as of gunfire, and now and then by a barking as of an excited dog. It was not until after several hours that he realized the amazing truth.

Then Titan returned to the laboratory, beating high on his chest in a rapid manner with both fists at once—a sign, Haverside realized, of intense joy.

Immediately behind the gorilla, gibbering with delight, a large baboon came in, pulling a rope. At the further end of the rope, red-faced, panting and flustered, was a tall be-spectacled professorial-looking man, his chest encircled by the hemp, and his arms pinned to his sides.

Halting in the middle of the floor, the prisoner gave vent to his rage.

"Blast it all!" he shouted glaring at the baboon. Then he uttered a stream of execrations which would have turned a stevedore green with envy. Suddenly his gaze fell upon Haverside and his tirade was cut short by astonishment.

"By glory!" he cried. "You're the fellow who started this mess."

"I'm Mark Haverside!" was all Haverside

could say, as his guards edged between him and the newcomer. "Who are you?"

"I'm the benighted idiot who attempted to rescue you," the bespectacled man roared savagely. "Maybe you've heard of me, crazy fool that I am. Harlan Crandall's my name!"

BEFORE Haverside could make any response, a crowd of apes and baboons came shuffling into the room, lugging three other groaning, swearing men.

One was tied by a rope about the right arm, one with a noose about his left leg, and the third struggling with both arms to prevent the strands from tightening about his neck.

Immediately following this unhappy group, several captured rifles and revolvers were borne in by a crowd of baboons and piled in triumph at Titan's feet.

"Well, here's the whole confounded rescue party," Crandall said, surveying the other prisoners. "Fine smart bunch of scientists we are. Tangled up by the nooses let down by those beasts from the jungle trees. It was a clever trap. We mistook the ropes for forest creepers in the darkness. Our firearms proved to be about as useful to save us as toothpicks."

Were there any other captives? This was the question raging in Mark Haverside's mind. What of the dog he had heard barking? Surely, it could have been none other than Trim. Just as surely, Trim had not been deceived by the nooses. What about Jeff and Laura? Hadn't they been members of the party?

He shouted those questions at the captives but no one seemed to hear him in the general turmoil.

As soon as the disturbance had died down a little, one of the trussed men turned a resentful glance in his direction.

"So you're the imbecile who got us into this infernal predicament?" he grumbled, with a scowl.

"Aw, lay off, Rushmore," another man said. "Don't let it get you down. That fellow's all right. He's got plenty of sand, fighting it out alone against those brutes."

Mark Haverside grinned at Professor Worthington. Briefly he described the fluids he had discovered and all that had happened.

"Listen, all of you!" he finally finished up. "If you'll only be patient, I've got something in mind—something we can work out together—as soon as we get the chance—"

His words died as if frozen on his lips. In his excitement, he had forgotten Titan. But the glitter, cold and ironic, in the gorilla's eyes, showed Haverside that he had said too much. The big ape had understood, if not every syllable, at least the gist of his remarks. Henceforth, if he was not to jeopardize all his schemes, he must not communicate with the other men in any way comprehensible to the ape chieftain.

"Man-beast, you not get chance," Titan took up Mark's last words, his lower lip curled into something between a snarl and a sneer. "I not let you."

Bending down, and pointing to a vial containing the Depression Fluid, he gave an order to one of the apes.

"Here! You use."

The five men exchanged glances of consternation.

"What are they going to do?" Crandall muttered.

For reply, Titan threw back his mighty head, and laughed.

Mark Haverside, in horror, realized that the gorilla intended to depress the four men before using them as slaves!

Now was the time, he knew, to try out the first of his schemes. At all costs, the men must retain their intelligence, if only so that they might join him in the plot for their own escape. But how prevail beneath Titan's watchful eyes?

"Wait a minute there!" he called to Titan, as the chimpanzee, Spider, took out the hypodermic needles. "Magic water no good unless I mix!"

With trembling fingers Haverside took up two vials of the Depression Fluid, and combined them in a bowl. Then he poured them back into the bottles. Slowly and painstakingly he did the same with the Fluid of Enlightenment. He repeated the process with other vials all of which would have no effect whatever on the Enlightenment Fluid. When the mixing was done, between his teeth he spelled out to the captives, fearful lest Titan should catch his meaning:

"S-t-a-r-t a c-o-m-m-o-t-i-o-n!"

All the tied men had heard the message. Immediately all began to shriek, pull and grapple each other as if gone berserk.

It did not take the apes long to put down the rebellion, but in the interval, while Titan's attention was diverted to the mutineers, Mark Haverside had time to pour half a bottle of the Fluid of Enlightenment in-

to a half-filled vial of the Depression Fluid. Since the two drugs had opposite results on the nervous system, one would neutralize the other, and their combined effect would be that of so much salt water!

HAVING hastily made the mixture, while Titan chastised each of the rebellious four with resounding smacks on the back and shoulders, Haverside in a matter-of-fact manner handed Spider a vial of the neutralized fluid. The chimpanzee took up the hypodermic needle again.

Meanwhile Haverside, not daring to address the other captives in English lest the apes understand, knew that all was lost unless he could find some quicker means of communication than by spelling. But might he not talk with them in some foreign tongue? He himself knew French well, having spent two student years in Paris. He wondered if one of the other men, all of whom looked cultured and intelligent, could also speak this tongue?

"Ecoutez!" he said. "Parlez vous français?"

"Oui, monsieur. Très bien." It was Crandall, the bespectacled man, who answered.

Titan looked annoyed, but paid no heed to this gibbering. His gaze was focused on the hypodermic needle, which was about to enter the skin of the first victim.

Speaking in French, Mark Haverside hastily explained the trick he had played with the fluids.

"Pretend to be stupefied!" he said. "Appear docile. Obey all orders. Then, when the time comes, we'll act."

All four captives nodded understandingly.

CHAPTER V

The Depression Deepens

IT WAS a strange party that entrained from Accra one morning several weeks later. Three freight cars filled with dogs! There were large dogs of every breed and cross-breed, who set up such a yapping and barking as to drown out even the noise of the locomotive. But now and then a big Australian sheep-dog, with a V-shaped white marking on his blue-gray forehead, would ramble back and forth among the others. By a motion, a nip, a grunt, a growl, he would silence

the multitude.

At the little town of Kumasi, they all alighted. Here their leader, leaping back and forth with a brisk barking, kept them in bounds. But he in turn looked for orders to the human pair who descended from a rear coach—a man and a woman dressed in hunting clothes, and laden each with a pack and firearms.

Both wore a stern, determined expression, and also a look of concern as they observed how silent Kumasi had become, how the last house had been deserted, how the woods stood empty and forsaken.

"Just as I expected, Laura," the man remarked. "This only goes to prove we haven't come one minute too soon."

"Too bad, isn't it, we couldn't get anyone else to join us?" Laura mused. "Still, I have confidence in Trim's ability to protect us."

"Trim's worth a brigade of men!" Jeff Pembrook said.

What need to remind her what a desperate chance they were taking? It had been their idea that a company of dogs, shrewdly led by Trim, might take Titan by surprise, and keep him at a distance. Then, by means of a steel-cutting saw, Pembrook might get Mark Haverside out of his cage.

With Haverside's aid and that of other rescued men, they might succeed in overthrowing the gorilla chief.

For weeks Trim had been training the army of dogs, who had been especially selected for their size and intelligence. There was reason to hope that they would be more than a match for the followers of Titan.

But much time, unavoidably, had been lost in these preparations. How would poor Haverside be faring now? And was there any chance of rescuing Crandall, Rushmore and the other lost adventurers?

As they set out through the woods toward the village of Poonga, they noticed occasional signs of the new regime. Bridges and houses had been demolished, apparently as a challenge to all the works of man. Here and there some depressed human was to be seen toiling on hands and knees, with a bird pecking at his ears, or a monkey clinging to his back, jabbering commands.

Once, they could not keep back their anger at sight of some stolen packing cases, in which several small children were huddled, while baboons stood by in a babbling crowd, jabbing at them, trying to make them perform tricks, and laughing in loud guffawing

glee when the infants cried with exasperation.

It was with difficulty that Jeff Pembrook controlled his impulse to rush to the rescue. But he well knew that a premature outburst would defeat his entire purpose. So, reluctantly, he went on, following Trim through the wilderness. . . . He could only hope that unseen watchers had not borne the news of their arrival to the enemy chieftain.

But as they traveled mile after mile through the dark jungle trails, his misgivings began to leave him. They had nowhere been molested; nowhere had there been any sign of spying eyes amid the tangles of leaves and vines. And the travelers' vigilance had relaxed ever so slightly when at last the danger appeared.

It was past midday, and they had paused by a riverbank for a brief rest. Suddenly a ferocious yapping arose from deep within a thicket. At once all the dogs, except Trim, leaped off in the direction of the disturbance. Impulsively Pembrook seized his rifle, and started after them.

"Not so fast there!" Laura pleaded.

But Pembrook did not even hear her. A deafening din of barking had arisen from all sides, and there was no thought in his mind but to investigate the possible danger.

He was never able to recall just what it was that happened during the next moments' confusion. He only knew that, as he ran toward the thicket, the whole universe seemed to fall upon him from every direction at once. He was overwhelmed, stifled, crushed by a mass of heavy objects.

Borne down and squirming on the earth, he felt big hairy arms winding about his head, his neck, his chest. To struggle was futile. Half choked, half blinded, he could only writhe like a worm.

Still vainly kicking, he felt himself being lifted, and saw the ground retreating and masses of leaves closing about him. As his eyes regained their function, he looked into two blinking yellowish pairs of orbs, and saw the mocking grimace on two apish faces while, from the throats of two chimpanzees, he heard a barking as of excited dogs.

TOO late he realized that he had been lured toward the thicket by a ruse of the beasts, some of whom had lain in wait in the trees as others were leading the dogs off on a false trail by their imitation of barking.

But now the foiled canines, rushing back

and nosing and growling on the ground ten feet beneath, were powerless to help. For the arms of the apes, stronger than those of any man, were still about the captive, and his captors had no intention of allowing him to leave the tree.

"Jeff! Jeff!" he heard Laura's terrified scream. "Where are you?"

Before he could reply, a large dark fist had jammed itself into his mouth, and all he could utter was a vague gurgling.

"Jeff! Jeff! Where are you? Where are you, Jeff?"

He could still hear that frightened cry, again and again. But it was growing more distant now. Gradually it faded out. . . .

It seemed to Pembrook that hours went by while he remained a prisoner in the tree. Then, from a chorus of monkey voices not far away, there came an excited sound that he took to be an "All clear," and the chimpanzees descended with their captive and dragged him away.

Pummeled, mauled, buffeted, bruised, kicked, spat upon, laughed at, Jeff Pembrook felt a murderous resentment in his heart. Yet how could he strike back? His firearms had been taken from him and his oppressors' guns and clubs could have disposed of more than one man. Worst of all, he knew that his ordeal had only begun. And he was shaken by such anxiety for Laura that his own fate seemed not to matter.

Compelled to match his speed to the jogging pace of his captors, he was prodded for miles along a newly cleared trail, on which he saw gangs of depressed humans laboring beneath the whips of animal overseers. It still lacked an hour or two of sunset when, at length, he found himself in familiar territory. He and his captors began to descend a hill toward the long sprawling thatched house and the rude outhouses where Mark Haverside had lived and worked.

Just outside the main building, which contained the laboratory, Pembrook received one of the worst shocks of all. Tethered to a post like a chained dog, his hands tied and his legs enclosed within such a narrow ring of rope that he could hardly move, was a scholarly-looking graying individual whom Pembrook recognized despite his emaciated condition and the torn and muddied state of his clothes.

"Good grief!" he cried. "Professor Worthington!"

But Worthington only stared at Jeff Pem-

brook out of dulled eyes in which no recognition seemed to dwell.

"Don't you remember me?" Pembrook asked, straining away from his captors and extending his right hand. "I'm Jeff Pembrook!"

But Worthington's look was as stupid as that of some questioning beast. His head hung in hangdog fashion. It was hard to believe that those faded gray eyes had ever flashed with life and intelligence. In dismay, Pembrook realized that the professor had been depressed.

Yet he would have been astonished could he have seen how, the instant he had turned his back, a fierce, almost fiery glitter came into the lusterless eyes, the captive's whole frame shook, and his tied hands trembled with emotion.

Inside the laboratory, Pembrook was treated to a new surprise, at the sight of a grave, bearded individual who stood above a rude cradle, rocking two long-limbed brown urchins much smaller than human babes.

The little spider monkeys, giggling with glee, would reach up every now and then and pull the man's beard. This they thought vastly amusing, particularly if he cried out or if his face showed contortions of pain. And lest he show any inclination to shirk, a larger monkey stood above him with an iron hook, which he jabbed every now and then into the victim's flesh.

Could it be that this was Dr. Bryce Rushmore, the celebrated zoologist, another of the lost companions of Harlan Crandall?

Pembrook thought that Rushmore gave a start of recognition as he entered. But he may only have imagined it for, when Pembrook addressed him, Rushmore's look was that of one who had neither seen nor heard anything.

Soon afterward, Pembrook's attention was diverted in another direction. With a shock of horror, he recoiled as he caught sight of the huge, thick-limbed, black creature at the further end of the room.

BUT Titan's back was turned. He did not even glance toward his new victim. A tall bespectacled individual, Dr. Crandall himself, stood at the gorilla's side, going over the beast's hide with a fine brush. Every now and then Crandall would pick something with his fingers out of the black hair. In return for this service, all that he received was an occasional growl, or a slap on the shins. Once

the ape, in irritation, slashed at him with his teeth.

But Crandall, like the others, gave no sign of recognition, although Jeff Pembrook called out to him in surprise.

For a quarter of an hour Pembrook was forced to stand there witnessing other men's humiliation, as if by way of a preview of his own approaching lot. Then abruptly Titan wheeled about. Still paying no attention to Pembrook, he barked out an order. At once one of the chimpanzees left in a hurry, to return after five minutes, yanking another familiar figure after him.

"Mark!" Pembrook exclaimed. He would have rushed toward his old friend, had not strong arms held him back.

"Jeff! So they captured you, also!"

"Be quiet there! Man-beast ought be seen, not heard."

It was Titan who rumbled forth this command. Swaggering forward with mockery in his brutish features, he interposed his great hulk between the two men.

"Man-beast," he roared, glaring at Mark Pembrook. "I want you give me magic water. Me depress new man-beast. Ugh! I not like his looks!"

Jeff Pembrook's heart seemed to sink into his shoes at this order. Ever since his capture, of course, he had known just what must happen, but not until he had seen Worthington and the others had he understood how debased his lot was to be.

Meanwhile, in response to Titan's orders, Mark Haverside had docilely taken up a little vial marked "Depression Fluid." Was there nothing, Pembrook wondered, that Haverside could do for his old friend? Must he be quite so subservient in taking orders from his master?"

Dexterously Mark Haverside's fingers worked to prepare the hypodermic. But Titan, as if suspecting a plot, would not permit the two men to come within several yards of one another.

Peremptorily he ordered the chimpanzee Spice to inject the fluid.

It would have been futile for Pembrook to struggle! His arm was held in the grip of Titan himself, a grip that could have wrenched his very bones from their sockets.

Yet Jeff Pembrook's regret was not for himself. He was thinking of Laura whom, in a depressed condition, he could not aid.

But what was it that Mark Haverside, from halfway across the room, was trying to tell

him? His friend's eyes sparkled as if to convey a message; unspoken words trembled upon his lips. Then suddenly he broke into speech. But what was he saying? Had misfortune affected his mind? For, surely, those were not English syllables! He was talking in French!

That much only Pembrook could understand, for he had received but a smattering of French in college. He could not distinguish the words. He was not even sure that they made sense. But the eagerness in Mark Haverside's manner was unmistakable. Jeff Pembrook was convinced that there was something very important that he should know but somehow had not grasped.

The next moment the needle, roughly handled, entered his skin and he winced, not so much at the pain, as at the thought of the slave-life that awaited him.

CHAPTER VI

Death by Inches

BACK within his cage, Mark Haverside was chewing hungrily at a half decayed pulpy red fruit flung him by his overseer.

Just outside, Titan stood beating his chest with the flat of his hand in lazy contented slaps. His dark little eyes rolled from side to side, showing their whites in a manner that would have seemed comical to any one not in Haverside's predicament. A faint smile lay upon Titan's lips. It was evident that the big gorilla felt at peace with himself and with the world.

"Man-beast, I catch all your friend. Already catch he-friend." By the last remark, he evidently referred to Jeff Pembrook. Not having learned the word for "woman," he added, "Pretty soon catch she-friend too."

Mark Haverside kept on eating.

"I make big trap for she-friend," the ape continued. "Many animals fill woods all sides. Front of her, look like she get away. She run, dog run too. She not see nothing. Big hole in ground, all covered with leaves. She fall, drown in water underneath. Ha, ha, ha! Serve right. That teach nobody run away from Titan!"

Slapping his capacious paunch with a blow heavy enough to incapacitate a man, the ape broke into a hoarse mocking laughter. The

grin on his ugly features was so evil, the twinkling light in his rolling eyes so malign, that Mark Haverside felt an overpowering hatred boiling up from the depths of his soul. It was with difficulty that he restrained himself from springing madly at his oppressor.

But his concern was now with Laura. For it was clear that the beast, with diabolical cunning, had set a trap for her. If she took the path of escape he had seemingly left open—and, of course, she would take it—her life would be in peril. The one chance for her was that Trim would extricate her. But considering that Titan now knew where the dog's loyalties lay, this chance was hardly a straw to clutch at.

Absorbed in such bitter reveries, Mark Haverside let his food drop to the cage floor. He hardly heard the roar with which Titan summoned his followers. He was only roused from his broodings when, a few minutes later, he noticed that a crowd of animals had gathered in an open space outside his cage: apes, baboons, monkeys, horses, burros, hogs, tapirs, quetzals, parrots, geese, squirrels, rats, and numerous other creatures.

In their midst was one human being. It was Jeff Pembrook who looked as depressed as if the fluid had actually taken effect.

It did not occur to Haverside, as he watched the ensuing scene, that an arena so close to his cage had been chosen for his especial benefit; that he was meant to be included in the torment. Few could have guessed that his ordeal was to be more terrible than that of the immediate victim.

Shouldering his way through the animals, Titan placed himself just before Jeff Pembrook. He lifted one hand, and cuffed him on the head by way of a preliminary warning.

"Down!" he commanded.

As Pembrook made no response, the gorilla pushed him to his knees, to the accompaniment of chuckles from the apes and monkeys.

"Walk like dog!" the gorilla shouted.

Pembrook was forced upon his hands and knees, while the simians howled their merriment. Then, in spontaneous joy, a spider monkey leapt upon his back, and clung there while the victim, goaded with sticks, had to jog back and forth, like a mounted horse.

"Beast-man, he make many trick," Titan exulted. All the apes echoed his amusement with hearty gusts of laughter.

Clutching at the cage-bars, Haverside foamed with indignation to observe the indignities heaped upon his friend. He was com-

peled first to crawl along the ground, to jump through a hoop which Titan held out for him, to balance himself upside down while the ape held his legs, to engage in a wrestling bout with Spice and Spider, wherein, outnumbered two to one, he was almost crushed, to the delight of the watching birds and beasts.

What Mark Haverside also noticed was the gathering light of fury and revolt burning in the eyes of the persecuted man. Haverside dreaded the sequel even more than he did the present torment. Oh, if only he had been able to get his message across to Jeff Pembrook—to warn him to pretend to be depressed!

But now the ordeal was coming to a climax. Spice and Spider, lifting themselves into the overhanging limb of a tree, swung back and forth vigorously. Titan pointed to Pembrook.

"Man-beast, you make same," he ordered.

Jeff Pembrook although of an athletic build, had never attempted to shine as an acrobat, and it is not surprising therefore that his efforts to swing from the limb evoked spasms of laughter.

NO ONE seemed to observe the blaze that was deepening in his eyes. No one was prepared for his action when, as Spice came carelessly close to shout an order, Pembrook swung himself with all his might and drove both feet full into the chimpanzee's face.

The ape yelled, and retreated, more frightened than hurt, as the man let himself down to the ground. For a moment there was a howling pandemonium as the beasts, intimidated, retreated before this worm that had so unexpectedly turned.

Mark Haverside meanwhile felt a great sinking of the heart. Jeff Pembrook, for all his courage, had unwittingly betrayed them both!

This became evident when Titan, instead of hurling his anger at Pembrook, turned in a frenzy toward Mark Haverside's cage. Wrathfully he beat with both fists upon his lower ribs, striking them with hardly a pause, and roaring in a voice like a foghorn. And not until this din had silenced all the other beasts did he descend to articulate speech.

"Man-beast," he rumbled; his ugly pugnacious jaws were thrust forward like those of a pugilist eager to clinch with the foe. "Man-beast, you make bad trick. Magic water, him not magic water. Friend there—" here he pointed to Jeff—"magic water not work, or him not kick back. You try fool me,

man-beast. I fix you!"

With a sharp rattling, as Mark Haverside shrank to the extreme corner of the cage, the key clicked in the lock, and the door swung open.

Yet Titan did not seize his prey with quite the expected fury. Firmly, in the manner of one contemplating a cool, planned vengeance, the beast advanced. His eyes flashed as much with exultation as with rage as he lifted his victim out of the cage and carried him toward the main building.

Inside the laboratory, Haverside was strapped upon a table which, he recognized with a shudder, he had often used to experiment upon animals. And across from him, on another operating table, Jeff Pembrook was also being lashed down by two chimpanzees.

"This finishes us," Pembrook exclaimed. But a wad of filthy cloth, clamped into his mouth, cut his outburst short.

Meanwhile, from a glass case near the wall, Titan picked several knives, scalpels, and assorted surgical implements. Approaching Mark Haverside he examined him thoughtfully, in the manner of a surgeon about to operate. "Man-beast, once you use these," he growled. "Now I use."

With a swift movement, he ran one of the knives across Haverside's forehead, drawing blood in a scratch six inches long.

"You use these. Cut animal alive. See what you find inside. Now I see inside man-beast."

Promptly the ape slashed at Haverside's cheek, drawing blood in a longer gash than before.

His victim twitched slightly, but gave no other sign. The sullen, determined look on Titan's face had told him it was vain to plead or protest. But from a score of simians, gathering about like medical students watching an experiment, there came howls and chuckles of glee.

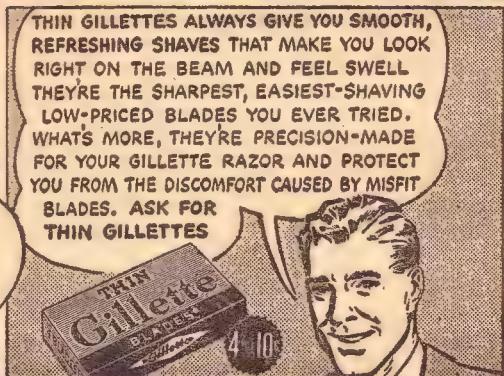
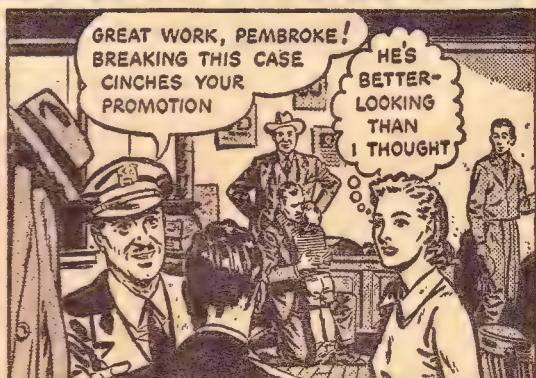
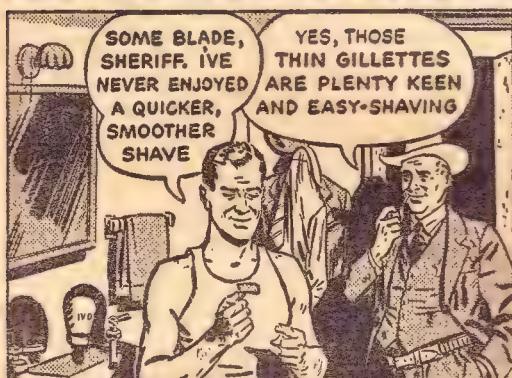
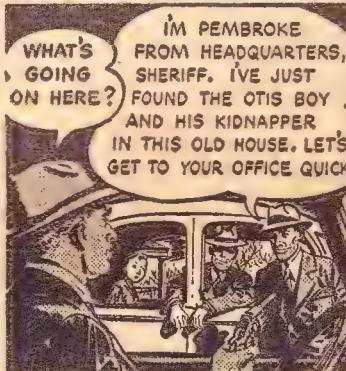
Encouraged, Titan grabbed with one hand at the man's shirt. Beneath the powerful tug, the fabric ripped like cheesecloth, baring the victim's chest.

Carelessly the ape swung a scalpel, while regarding the exposed expanse.

"I know not where start," he went on, making a slight incision at a point above the heart. "Maybe here."

A roar of laughter signified the spectators' approval.

Trail Leads To Haunted House And Then . . .



Meanwhile Haverside, bound so tightly that his circulation was all but checked, sweated with a cold perspiration. He glanced about him, into the amused, pitiless yellow eyes of the chimpanzees, into the glittering derisive eyes of a parrot perched on a bench nearby, into the childishly interested eyes of monkeys and baboons, and into the malign, intelligent eyes of Titan.

Haverside knew that, unless the beast meant this as but a ruse, all hope for him and Jeff Pembrook was gone.

If only they could have died in the thick of a good fight! That, at least, would have been worth while. But to perish slowly, writhing beneath the blades of his brute torturers—that, of all indignities, seemed the most wretched.

"Man-beast, you die," the watching parrot jeered. With a flash of blue and green plumage, it went fluttering about the room. "You die, man-beast! Die!"

"You die!" the monkeys echoed the parrot in a screaming chorus, as of children rejoicing. At that juncture, Mark Haverside remembered his one chance of salvation.

"If I die, Titan, I cannot make you any more magic water," he called out. "Who will make it then?"

THE gorilla, rising from his crouching position above the table, straightened himself up and beat his chest with one resounding smack.

"I not care!" he bellowed, his thick lower lip curling vindictively. "You make magic water wrong. Him no good. I not trust you no more. Maybe sometime other man-beast make magic water. If you die, plenty man-beast still left."

"But only I know the secret—" Haverside started to protest.

The words stopped. For Titan, as if not hearing, had removed a wicked-looking saw-edged instrument from the surgical case, and was turning back toward his victim with a gloating light in his twinkling little eyes.

"Long time man-beast cut animal alive and now animal cut man-beast," Titan gloated, drawing near, he prepared to set to work.

"Man-beast, you die!" the parrot screeched again, flitting about the room in joyous excitement. And the monkeys, like a chorus of exultant fiends, took up the cry.

"You die! Man-beast, you die!"

* * * * *

It was Trim who took command during

that crisis in the woods when the other dogs had all gone dashing off and Jeff Pembrook had seized his rifle and followed. It was Trim who, leaping up and down in flashing-eyed excitement, had flung himself against Laura and prevented her from trailing after Jeff. Trim had realized at once something was wrong.

Seizing her by the flap of her jacket, he had dragged her off through the forest.

At first, in her bewilderment, she had hardly known that the dog was drawing her away from her husband.

"Jeff! Jeff!" she had shrieked. "Where are you?"

Time after time she had repeated her appeal, growing more desperate, more frightened, as her cries evoked no response. From somewhere amid the thickets, she could hear sounds of scuffling, accompanied by a confusion of bestial voices. But after a time these noises died out, and she found herself alone with Trim, who still drew her away by means of powerful tugging.

As one by one the other dogs returned through various jungle trails, Laura noticed that some of them were gashed and blood-streaked. Some were frightened; and skulked along with their tails between their legs as if they had been whipped. One or two were limping. Several, even after the passage of hours, never returned at all.

But where was Jeff? This was the thought that, overpowering, all-insistent, possessed her mind. Had he been killed? Somehow, she could not believe so. But, at the very least, he had been taken prisoner. And Laura well knew what that meant.

Pausing to rest beside a vine-covered fallen tree, she let her tears flow without restraint. Trim, standing beside her and licking the bitter salt drops from her face, stared at her with big luminous eyes that showed as much sympathy as any human countenance.

If Jeff had been captured, it was up to her to rescue him. How could this be accomplished? She did not know, yet not for a minute did she consider the risk. Resolutely, after a little rest, she started off again.

"Take me to Titan's camp!" she whispered to Trim, for she was ignorant of the way.

Trim's knowing bright eyes gleamed. He nodded his blue-gray head and loped willingly off into the woods.

But no matter in what direction he started, he soon stopped with a snarl or a growl, and

turned back, as if some hidden enemy had blocked his road. Finally, after many efforts, it became evident that there was only one path which they could take unmolested. That path, to judge from Trim's movements, led directly away from Titan.

The message, therefore, seemed clear.

"Go away, lady, and we will leave you alone." That appeared to be the warning. "But if you seek to enter deeper into our territory or to rescue your husband, then beware!"

Despite his wonderful intelligence, Titan could not conceive that Laura would follow any other course. His own painful experiences with the human race—the agony of the wound dealt him by the vengeful seaman—had given him a wrong conception of mankind. His twisted intelligence could not comprehend that human beings could be self-sacrificing. Love, being something he had never known, was an emotion he could not imagine. Hence it had never occurred to him that Laura would be concerned about anything more than about her own safety. And her instinct to escape would lead her toward the death-dealing pitfall in the jungle.

IT was, accordingly, something quite beyond Titan's contemplation that bade Laura to press close to Trim.

"Come, let's go to him," she whispered to the sheep-dog. "We've got to find a way at once. We must waste no time."

Similarly, being a stranger to canine ways and loyalties, the gorilla would have been unable to understand Trim's wagging tail, and the eagerness with which he began to sniff and circle through the underbrush with the idea of finding a way to Jeff Pembrook and Mark Haverside.

But was he attempting the impossible? Still there seemed no way around the many guards posted in the woods. After a number of false starts, Trim sat on his haunches for a few minutes, with a contemplative expression in his bluish eyes. Then, with a low bark which seemed to advise Laura, "Stay here," he started off through the undergrowth.

A minute later, the girl heard him break into savage barking. There followed a commotion of yells and shouts. He came darting back along the trail, pursued by a mob of unarmed men, who gave chase in a half-hearted way. In a few minutes, the men had been dispersed and driven off helter-skelter by the other dogs, who ran out from all direc-

tions, yapping and nipping at their heels, throwing them into a panic.

These men, Laura realized, were depressed humans whom Titan had trained to serve as sentinels, in order to supplement his animal forces. They were too stupid not to follow Trim blindly, too stupid to see through his ruse—so stupid, in fact, that the gorilla could not have been expected to place much reliance upon them.

And, indeed, they proved to be but the outer line of defense. After Trim had returned, he and Laura advanced unmolested for a little distance while the depressed sentries searched for them in vain. Then warily the dog began to circle again while Laura, peeping out into an open tract through green vines, saw the real enemy. Her face grew pale with apprehension as she realized the lines through which she would be forced to pass!

CHAPTER VI

Through the Defenses

EQUIPPED with revolvers, several boons were strutting back and forth. A gigantic bull, with a fire of malign intelligence in his eyes, was stamping across the field as if looking for foes to charge. Two stallions, alert with a sagacity beyond the equine tribe, were surveying the scene contemplatively. Vultures, parrots and other birds drifted above as if conducting an aerial reconnaissance. Many monkeys hung in the trees at the far end of the clearing.

Altogether, to dare these sentinels seemed out of the question. Having enjoyed the benefits of the Fluid of Enlightenment, they were not like the depressed men. They were too alert to be tricked.

Trim came back. For several minutes he remained crouched in a thoughtful silence. Having reached a decision, he led Laura to a place of safety in the rear. Then he crept forward to the edge of the clearing and let out a series of low throaty grunts.

As he leaped back toward the girl, his alert ears caught the response.

After the first confused cries of alarm, there came a series of clearer calls, all of which—whether voiced in the screams of birds, the neighing of horses, the bellowing of the bull, or the shrieks and shouts of the

simians—had one recognizable quality. They were all marked by three long notes followed by one short.

This was the secret danger signal of the animals! The wily Titan, realizing Trim's enmity, had recently changed the signal, as Trim had expected he would.

Therefore, from deep in the woods, even as the beasts set out to investigate the disturbance, Trim uttered three long barks and one short. And the other dogs, drilled to follow his lead, joined him with three long each, and one short. They kept repeating this call with the glee that most canines have in hearing their own voices.

Confused squeals and howls arose from the other animals, sounds of dismay and fright. Trained to regard three long calls and one short as the danger signal, no matter by whom uttered, the creatures were swept by consternation, which only grew as the barking continued. They could not know that the dogs were not friendly. Several dogs beside Trim had been made super-intelligent by the Fluid of Enlightenment. In the last few hours all of these had come out to join Trim, and Titan, for fear of hurting morale of his own followers, had kept these defections secret. So those warning barks seemed to tell of real peril.

Soon the alarmed shrieking of a parrot started a panic among Titan's followers. Several monkeys, gibbering with fright, heightened the alarm. Some horses, snorting with terror, joined in the rush with the instinctive timidity of their kind. Within a moment, the bull and the baboon and all the other beasts had added themselves to the stampede. And Trim, when he led Laura into the field, found it deserted.

Meanwhile the panic was spreading like fire. It had communicated itself to all the animals of the surrounding districts. They, likewise, burst into impetuous flight. Their newly acquired reason, it appeared, was only skin-deep compared with the age-old instinct of self-preservation which bade wings and legs to go speeding off at the first shock or threat of danger.

Now it was that Trim and Laura, pressing beyond into another clearing in the jungle, were treated to a fresh surprise. Lashed with ropes to large rocks, like convicts dragging ball and chain, were four human beings. All were energetically striving to free themselves, but, as their hands were tied, they were having no success. As they wretchedly

struggled with their fetters, all were too pre-occupied to notice Laura, Trim and the other dogs approaching.

"Well, if it doesn't look like that rock scientist," Laura started to exclaim. But Trim had set up such an excited barking that the girl could not hear her own voice.

Running forward with joyously wagging tail, the dog threw himself upon his old friend and fellow adventurer, Dr. Harlan Crandall!

The next moment, after greeting the paleontologist with licking tongue and loud yaps of pleasure, the dog leaped happily toward Dr. Bryce Rushmore and Professors Ellery Stone and Lloyd Worthington.

All four men had been forgotten by their guards amid the stampede and they were immediately freed by the sharp teeth of the dogs, which had little difficulty in severing the ropes.

Titan paused with his scalpel poised high in air, like an artist examining his canvas. Then slowly he lowered the blade, making a cross-shaped mark on his victim's chest.

MARK HAVERSIDE twitched slightly, but no sign came from his lips.

"Die, man-beast," the parrot mirthfully continued to screech, as it went flapping about the room.

Closing his eyes, Mark Haverside awaited the end. When the bird's clamor momentarily died down, he could hear Jeff Pembrook writhing and muttering on the table opposite.

"Man-beast, you die slow," Titan rumbled. "More time me enjoy!"

An arrow pain shot through the victim's chest at the contact of the sharp steel. If only the end might come soon!

But why had the gorilla paused? What was that strange noise from without? It was a tumult caused by many mingled voices. With a new hope, Mark Haverside opened his eyes. He saw Titan, along with all the other apes and monkeys, standing at a position of attention, staring toward a western window. The next moment, all the beasts had crowded to the window, and were excitedly peering out.

"They run! Look—look. They run!"

These words were screamed by the parrot as it fluttered about with a wild flashing of plumage.

"All animals run," the bird howled again.

Titan beat his chest, and yelled something unintelligible. He dropped the scalpel, snatched a rifle from its rack on the wall, and

started from the room.

But at the door he paused.

"Man-beast, I come back," he said, warningly. "Animals all big scared and they run. I go stop that. You wait. I come back right away."

Then to the chimpanzees Spice and Spider he bellowed an order, at which they ranged themselves beside the door as guards. Throwing back his great scarred head in a roar of defiance, he went shambling out of the room, followed by lesser apes and monkeys in a pushing, squirming, gesticulating, gibbering crowd.

From without, long after they had left, Jeff Haverside and Mark Pembrook could hear a confused noise as of shouting and scuffling. They did not know about the panic deliberately started by Trim by means of the false signals. But they did realize that their oppressor was absent a long while. And they did feel a faint new hope, despite the fact they were both lashed down so tightly that all their efforts to free themselves were useless.

What cheered them most was that they heard, after a few minutes, a tumult of barking. A sound not as of one dog, but of many! It sounded as if all the animals were in an angry frenzy and a score of dog-fights were being waged simultaneously. Then, in the midst of all, there came the sudden crack of a rifle. What could it mean?

But had they seen what was going on outside, they would have been encouraged. On rushing out, Titan had not doubted that he would soon quell the panic. The overwhelming power of his presence would suffice. But he found that the disturbance had gone further than he had supposed. Even his shouts and bellowings could not immediately bring order back to the distracted beasts and birds, who

dashed and flew about in the throes of terror.

After a time, when his roaring commands did begin to have an effect, a new danger confronted him. He was never to know how cleverly it had all been planned by Trim and his human companions but he did see the furry gray-blue form bounding out of the woods, with a savage barking. He did raise his rifle and fire—with results that he was to regret. For, being far from adept at shooting, he sent his bullet wide of its mark; while the noise only added to the panic of the beasts.

Snapping the weapon in half in a frenzy, he let out a scream loud enough to intimidate a whole canine brigade, and started toward his enemy bare-handed. But at this challenge, Trim slipped back into the woods; while other dogs, springing forward from a dozen directions and ferociously snarling and barking, chased monkeys and baboons helter-skelter, lending new impetus to the panic. Some even had the temerity to leap and snap at the heels of Titan himself.

In this emergency, the ape had no choice but to leave his victims in the laboratory a little longer. But were they not well guarded by Spice and Spider? Even if unguarded, how could they escape, bound as they were?

It was unfortunate for Titan that, amid the din of howling and barking, he could not hear the struggle then convulsing the laboratory.

WHILE he was fighting off the dogs, and amusing himself by seizing the most daring by their legs or tails and dashing out their brains against tree-trunks, Jeff Pembrook and Mark Haverside became aware of a scuffling just behind them. But though they strained to see what was happening, they could not turn their heads sufficiently. Yet, they continued to hear a thud-

[Turn page]

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...ing of violent blows, accompanied by growls, barks, screeches and yells. Next came the sound of breaking bottles and crockery, and a noise of heavy bodies thumping on the floor.

It was in delirious disbelief that Jeff Pembrook, a moment later, felt something moving at his side, and looked up into the eyes of —none other than Laura! Quickly she bent over him, and, with dextrous though hurried fingers, unwound his fastenings. And meantime, with the feeling of one awakening from a nightmare, Mark Haverside was staring at Dr. Crandall and Professor Worthington who, gashed and bleeding, were working to release him.

All the laboratory within a dozen feet of the door was in a state of ruin. Broken vials, test-tubes and beakers lay in glittering profusion amid a smear of newly spilled blood.

Trim, with bleeding face but triumphant eyes, stood at one side, panting heavily, his tongue hanging from his mouth. On the floor, writhing amid coils of rope, were Spice and Spider, their yellow eyes glaring malevolently. Above them, each grasping a club, stood Dr. Rushmore and Professor Stone, disheveled and dirty, and disfigured with scratches and bruises.

At one glance Pembrook and Haverside grasped the situation. They knew how the four men, armed with clubs, had fallen upon the guards with Trim's aid and how, thanks to the very ropes with which they themselves had been tied, they had bound the chimpanzees.

But there was no time for explanations.

"Quick, we've not a second to waste!" Laura whispered into Jeff's ears, while the tight little squeeze she gave his hand spoke of her relief and joy more eloquently than words.

While the released men stretched their cramped limbs and tried to restore the circulation, Crandall and Worthington were making a rapid foray about the room, picking up vials marked "Depression Fluid" and "Fluid of Enlightenment." Nor did they neglect to seize some ropes and hypodermic needles.

Shaking with excitement and eagerness, the voice of Haverside rang out over all.

"Now's the time, folks," he cried. "Now's the time to carry out my plan—time to free ourselves—if you'll just follow what I say."

So long and so often had Mark Haverside gone over the scheme in his mind, so thoroughly worked out every detail for use in just such an emergency, that he lost not a

second in false moves. Like a good general, he took instant command of operations.

"You, Jeff, and you, Rushmore, bottom drawer to your right!" he ordered, in fiery haste. "Take out those stout rubber bands. You'll find some good strong sticks, and nails to fit them together over there, third drawer to your left. Make some slingshots and be quick."

"Laura!" he said, while Pembrook and Rushmore turned to obey. "And you, Ellery Stone! Upper compartment of case against the wall—there's a reserve of many small test-tubes. Fill them! Fill them fast with Depression Fluid."

From just outside, a growing confusion of voices diverted Mark Haverside's attention.

Leaping to a window, he saw a band of depressed men, including his former assistant, Hal Graham. All, swept by the general panic, were running in circles, panting and close to exhaustion. But instantly Haverside recognized his chance.

He gave an order to Trim, who, barking at the men's heels, drove them in sheep-dog fashion, until all had crowded cowering at one side of the building, where Crandall and Worthington took the cue, and filled hypodermic needles with the Fluid of Enlightenment.

It was but a matter of minutes before the sharp steel had plunged into the arms of ten.

As the revivifying liquid coursed through their veins and neutralized the Depression Fluid, these men were restored to their former selves. Like dreamers awakened from a troubled sleep, they ranged themselves beside the other men.

At the same time, the Fluid of Enlightenment was injected into several of the dogs, rendering them much more capable and intelligent.

But though the revived men armed themselves with clubs and stones, Mark Haverside realized how utterly inadequate his forces still were.

CHAPTER VII

Battle for Life

LATER, as Jeff Pembrook dashed into the laboratory with the fresh recruits, he saw a new storm brewing. The tumult from

without was suddenly, bewilderingly heightened. Screeches, screams and bellowings arose in an unintermittent din. Roars and thunders of defiance clamored from every side, and increased moment by moment.

Jeff Pembrook paused in the act of tying a slingshot.

"The whole forest is bearing down upon us," he cried.

Surely enough, a vast array of birds and animals had gathered at the jungle edge, and were pressing down in a multitude. There were parrots, quetzals, buzzards, and all manner of wild fowl, chimpanzees, baboons and spider monkeys, horses, burros, tapirs, bulls and goats, in rapidly encroaching companies. Like trained military brigades, they maneuvered as if by definite plan, in compact masses, any one of which seemed sufficient to break down the laboratory's frail defenses.

Mark Haverside knew then that Titan had succeeded in rallying his followers after their panic. Though the leader was still not to be seen, it was evident enough whose hand was behind the assault.

"Hurry, everybody, hurry," he shouted, as he sprang to Laura's side. Seizing some of the Depression-laden tubes, he began to seal their ends with little tin caps especially made for the purpose.

There came a thud against the outer door which Jeff Pembrook had bolted but a minute before. A window shattered, and a heavy object came crashing in. A green parrot fluttered just without with a jeering screech.

"Faster, as you value your lives," Haverside yelled. Laura was working with nimble fingers beside him and she saw that his face had gone white.

At the same time, there came a pounding against the outside wall. It continued, in a dull rhythm of ever louder and louder thumps, as of a battering-ram in action.

"If they get in, they'll pound us to a pulp," Crandall shouted. Yet he could not take time off to watch the apes as they banged heavy logs against the building.

Simultaneously, the thudding against the door was renewed, in a succession of crashes, as if it were hit by a sledge-hammer.

In that desperate moment, none of the trapped ones believed that they had five minutes to live. Although they still worked on, with ghastly faces, bulging eyes and quick-drawn breaths, they knew that the animals might break down the last defense at any moment.

"Quick!" Haverside gasped. "A slingshot!" He snatched one of the newly made weapons from Rushmore, and fitted one of the little Depression-filled test-tubes to the thick rubber band, as if it had been a stone to hurl.

"Every one do the same," he yelled. And as the slingshots were hastily distributed, all but the dullest-witted perceived just what Haverside was about.

The howls and screeches from without had risen to a new pitch of fury. So great was the pandemonium that only those in front heard the noise as the door-bolt collapsed and the door came crashing down.

But there was none who did not see the solid mass of animals, which, led by baboons and chimpanzees, stood facing them with eyes glittering hot with revenge and triumph.

For a moment the invaders stood stockstill, glaring in with that evil lust of victory, while those within glared back in consternation. Then slowly, with a deadly certainty, the intruders advanced. The green parrot fluttered above their heads.

"Down—down—down!" it screeched mockingly. "Man-beast fall down!"

At that moment Jeff Pembrook lifted his slingshot and discharged a test-tube laden with Depression Fluid. Mark Haverside, at his side, did likewise. And so did Laura, Dr. Crandall, and one or two others.

The result was instantaneous. Striking the apes violently, the glass of the test-tubes shattered against their hides and cut deep gashes, and the released Fluid, sprayed over the cuts, invaded their veins as effectively as if injected with hypodermic needles. Hence they immediately collapsed. The fire went out of their eyes and, scuffling and yelling idiotically, they had no thought but to escape.

PRESSING their advantage, Pembrook, Haverside and their followers rushed out after the disorganized rabble. In all directions they hurled their little vials of Depression Fluid, discharging them also into other companies of beasts which had begun by advancing to the attack, but soon split into leaderless stampeding masses. Assailed not only by the humans but by the dogs, who drove in savagely at both flanks, the animals began to fight among themselves, entangling each other wildly as they broke for safety in all directions.

Yet the victory was still not won. Unfortunately, Crandall, Rushmore and several of the others had been bowled over by the stam-

peding animals and knocked out of the battle. Moreover, the most redoubtable foe of all remained. Titan, shrewd captain that he was, commanded his troops from the rear and had not been hit by any of the Depression bombs. Only after Pembrook, Haverside and their men had been led too far afield by their enthusiasm, did the gorilla reveal himself.

In the zest of the charge, as he tried to overtake and depress a fleeing ape, Mark Haverside had been tripped by a small hole in the ground. Amid a sickening clatter, Haverside realized that he had broken his entire remaining store of Depression bombs. Worse than that, all of his followers except Jeff Pembrook had already exhausted their missiles, too. Also, night was now falling and it was becoming hard to see the enemy. Haverside pulled out a new style electric torch and pressed the button. The huge bulb made things as bright as day.

At this moment he heard a roar and Titan, lordly as ever, came shambling rapidly from the jungle, beating his chest. In the ape's right hand, he held a rifle which he was waving in the air. The red glare in his eyes said he would fight on, even though his kingdom crumbled.

Despite the scientist's courage, Titan's appearance was so terrible that Haverside drew back. There was something daunting about that huge hairy figure as it shambled forward to the attack. The heavy face was scarred and cruel looking. The ape's jaws snapped like those of a dog about to close on its prey.

Titan paused. His voice rumbled forth like thunder as he beat his chest and flung forth a challenge.

"You come, man-beast," he growled. "I kill you!"

A savage leopard slunk out of the jungle to Titan's side, glaring about with flaming eyes. A few paces off one of the men—a recently depressed human who had been restored to mental activity by Haverside's Enlightening Fluid—had lingered, as if transfixed by fear. The leopard bounded forward and felled the man to earth with a single blow.

The great ape moved forward again, pausing by the leopard's side.

"I kill you," Titan roared, waving the rifle.

"Yes, you die, man-beast," a parrot shrieked, then flew at Laura Pembrook with angry talons and beak. She dropped to one knee and fended off the angry bird.

The huge ape glared his defiance at Jeff

Pembrook and Mark Haverside. He seemed totally without fear. Did his alert mind perceive he still had a chance of victory? Had he learned the humans were nearly out of ammunition?

Growling like an enraged bear, he started toward Haverside. The dogs, intimidated by the ape's ferocity, retreated to a distance. Only a few yards separated him from Haverside, who was armed only with his electric torch. Though defenseless through the loss of his Depression bombs, Haverside held his ground.

Jeff Pembrook saw Haverside's danger with one quick glance. Clubs, he knew would be powerless against the monster since they would have no more effect upon him than the taps of so many twigs. Yet if Haverside were to retreat, all would be lost. Already some of the formerly depressed men were showing a tendency to run.

There was only one slim hope left.

"Hold the light on him, Mark," Pembrook called out. "I'm going to throw the bomb. If I miss, run for your life!"

As he spoke, Pembrook took his sole remaining tube of Depression Fluid, placed it in the leather holder and raised his slingshot.

Titan swung his arms high—one huge fist still holding the forgotten rifle—and began to advance again.

"Man-beast," he yelled, rolling his redened eyes. "I finish you now."

Holding the electric torch in his left hand, Haverside awaited the charge and prepared to dodge aside. But he had no real hope of evading the gorilla.

The ape, in his fury, ignored Pembrook. He did not see the little tube which whirled at him from the slingshot. He scarcely felt the impact of the glass as it shattered on his left shoulder, leaving a deep red gash. He pressed forward to seize his foe in his great hairy arms—to crush him, throttle him. But the powerful fluid in the glass tube had already entered his blood and was working with powerful effect.

Before he had advanced two paces something happened to his brain!

A MERE dozen feet from his intended victim, he shuddered, groaned, and stopped short. The light left his eyes. He staggered and looked around him in a bewildered helpless way, like one stunned by a blow.

"Man-beast . . . Man . . ." he mumbled. But the words died on his lips, as if their

meaning had eluded him.

The leopard that had felled the man and the parrot attacking Laura took one look at the beaten gorilla and fled.

It was at this juncture that Jeff Pembrook remembered the ropes, which, with the aid of his companions, he contrived to twist into lassoes.

A few minutes later Titan, writhing amid the heavy coils of hemp, was no more than any other captive beast.

* * * * *

With the taking of Titan, Titan's kingdom vanished. Most of the ape's followers were caught. A few, disappearing in the woods, were never seen again. Depressed to their normal selves, the chimpanzees, baboons and monkeys seemed not to remember their brief day of enlightenment. As for the men, women and children enslaved by the beasts—they were all restored to their former intelligence by the Fluid of Enlightenment.

Jeff and Laura Pembrook meanwhile, not anticipating the worldwide renown that awaited them when the news of their exploits became known, at last spent their long delayed vacation with Haverside. And one of the first things that Mark Haverside did, after making his guests at home, was to show them the ruins of some small vials.

"Yes, folks, I did it after careful thought," he confessed, as he drew an ink-marked

scrap of paper from his pocket and used it to light a cigarette. "What you see is the mortal remains of the Depression and Enlightenment Fluids. The formulas had better be forgotten. You see, I've decided to meddle no more with animal experiments, nor with substances affecting the brain and nervous system, lest I upset man's precarious ascendancy on this planet."

The Pembrooks gazed out of a window toward a barrel-chested black creature crouching in a cage and smiled with intense relief. As the beast beat his chest with two great fists and let out a bawling cry that could be heard a mile, Jeff and Laura exchanged understanding glances. Then Jeff reached down and petted a shaggy blue-gray sheep-dog.

"Well, people, except for Trim here, who knows but that Titan really would have had the ascendancy?" he said. "Yes, over this whole country and, in time, over the planet!"

Trim, still benefited by the Fluid of Enlightenment, wagged his tail and looked up with sparkling eyes.

"You're right," Trim seemed to say. "You're right!"

Mark Haverside and Jeff and Laura Pembrook gazed gratefully at the dog. They agreed that to their friend in the animal world belonged the credit of saving man from conquest by the beasts.



"I Give You My Word I Don't Know Where the Blonde Came From. She Just Appeared—"

GRANT MAYSON tried his best to explain why and how there was a woman in his laboratory—where women were taboo. Her presence meant serious consequences for him, but he could not imagine how she'd ever materialized.

The whole occurrence was impossible! The laboratory was tightly locked. Only he and the chief of staff had the combination. By no possible means could this girl have entered—and certainly the place was empty before he started up the generators in the laboratory. When he had completed his experiment and the lights went on—there she was!

She was not like any girl one would see around in the ordinary course of events. Her garments radiated light. She was glowingly blonde. She was perfectly formed. There was an electrical aura about her.

Meet this amazing girl from the cosmos in **THE MULTILLIONTH CHANCE**, next issue's spell-binding novel by John Russell Fearn. It's the science fiction treat of the year.

DEAD CITY

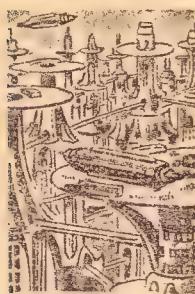
By MURRAY LEINSTER

Out of the misty past come weird creatures to prey upon mankind—but Pete Marshall and two aids meet the menace with scientific weapons that are born of flame and fury!

CHAPTER 1

Ancient Knife

It was a deadly, alien civilization which had been destroyed twenty thousand years ago, but its inhabitants didn't know it, and they made plans...



FROM beginning to end, it was Pete Marshall's show. His show, and the knife's.

Marshall had a big reputation as an archaeologist, and there's no question but that he'd earned it. But the knife ruined him professionally. You see, he'd worked out his own system for spotting digs, and for a time he was the fair-haired boy of American archaeology.

He pointed out that cities and settlements aren't located by chance, but for definite reasons—a harbor, trade-route, fertile ground or whatnot—and that surface remains aren't necessary to justify a dig. If a place should have been the site of a human settlement in ages past, it is worth while to dig it up to see. So he dug.

After he'd located Aztec remains in a Kansas cornfield—a trading-post, it was, for the Aztec caravans of slaves and merchandise even Prescott knew about—and found those Tartar artifacts in California, Pete Marshall was pretty much of an authority.

But then he went down to Yucatan to see if he could locate traces of pre-Mayan culture, and he came back with the knife.

The knife wasn't remarkable except that it had an odd handle. You can go down to a

hardware store right now and buy one almost exactly like it. A slightly different-shaped blade, perhaps, and the handle won't be at all the same, but practically the same thing in all essentials.

The knife Pete Marshall brought back from Yucatan was perfectly normal. But he swore that he'd found it twelve feet down in absolutely undisturbed strata, in the remnants of a primitive Indian culture of which there'd never been any previous sign. He brought back broken pottery and various oddments which did seem to establish a culture of sorts—more primitive than anything previously found south of the Aleutians, however—but that knife messed everything up.

It was a steel knife. Moreover, it was a stainless steel knife, and Marshall claimed it was at least eight thousand years old, and, he believed, more. But you don't have to know archaeology to realize that people weren't using steel knives eight thousand years ago, much less stainless steel ones. It was absurd.

But Marhall went to bat for the authenticity of his find. He staked his reputation on it. And he lost. The directors of the Museum of Comparative Anthropology tried to argue him out of his claims. He lost his temper and called them a pack of fools. They said, in pained language, that they accepted his resignation.

Truculently he asked what about the knife, and they said that he might as well take it away because, if they wanted stainless steel knives, they didn't have to fit out expeditions to get them. They could be bought in any modern department store.

MARSHALL put the knife in his pocket and marched out. Then he went to a chemical firm and had a bit of it analyzed,

AN AMAZING COMPLETE NOVELET



The amphibious tractor moved forward, throwing out heat rays which caused the jungle to burst into flame

and he patented the composition.

Because, you see, the knife was eight thousand years old—a good bit older, as it turned out—and it was as bright as the day it was made. Modern stainless steel just isn't that good. So the corporation that was formed to make the new steel is pretty prosperous, turning out precision instruments and physical standards and the sort of stuff that they used to have to use osmiridium for.

That steel is special!

But Marshall was ruined professionally, just the same. When you compared the knife with the primitive pottery and chipped flints Marshall claimed to have found with it, it didn't make sense! Still, he got moderately rich out of his patent on the new stainless-steel alloy, and then sank most of the money in a new, select expedition to go back to Yucatan and hunt for some more.

He took just two other men with him, Bill Apsley and Jeff Burroughs, but they were good. Burroughs, in his stolid fashion, knew as much about primitive man as anybody else in America. Apsley wasn't so much of a specialist, but he had an intuitive way of seeing through archaeological problems that had made sense out of nonsense before. In his fashion, he was brilliant.

The three of them sailed with a lot of very special apparatus, and unloaded at a tiny port in Yucatan, and Marshall set to work. He had a genius for organization. He had a mule-train hired and loaded, and had a gang of flat-faced peons recruited at least four times faster than anybody would have thought possible. The peons hired out because they'd ride to their work on mules. The mule-train went swinging off into a jungle-trail, actually, only five days after the expedition's stuff came ashore.

The three white men and their gang spent four days reaching the place where Marshall claimed he'd found the knife. His trenches were half-way filled in and already overgrown with jungle-stuff.

His gang cleaned them out in a hurry and they spent two weeks doing more work. Marshall set off a neat blast of explosives, blew a sweet crater in the ground and started a new trench from that. Crazy? Not at all. As the trench was dug, dirt wasn't hauled out of it. It was simply trundled to the crater and piled up, filling it.

That way it wasn't hauled above-ground and the peons considered that they weren't really working. What they hate is pushing

loaded wheelbarrows up inclined planes. Marshall had rubber-tired wheelbarrows for them, by the way, for their psychological effect. He got more work done with less trouble than anybody else in Central America.

Of course he wasn't digging up a whole city area. He was looking for something, not uncovering a site. And he found what he was looking for. Or rather, he didn't find what he didn't expect to find. He didn't find any more knives.

The remains of the ancient settlement were there, all right, and the expedition breezed through them. Artifacts were photographed *in situ*, uncovered, and packed. Ashes were picked over, dirt sifted, everything neatly catalogued, and on again with the trench.

It was archaeology in high gear, and at the end of it Apsley and Burroughs were pleased and happy. They had materials for a fairly complete study of a pre-Mayan culture that had never even been guessed at before.

It seemed to have vanished without traces in the culture of later peoples. And Apsley said flatly that eight thousand years was much too low an estimate of the culture-age. He put it much farther back, about contemporary with the Cro-Magnons of Europe, which was twenty to twenty-five thousand years ago.

"Hm," said Marshall, when the job was finished. "I didn't think we'd find any more knives. The one I found was either traded in or looted. There's absolutely no sign that these pre-Mayans could have come anywhere near making it."

"No-o-o," said Apsley. "They couldn't. Do you still insist you found that knife here?"

Marshall nodded without resentment.

"I always figured that it came from somewhere else," he said. "So I had some air-photo topographic maps made of all the country for a long way around. They cost like the devil! Figuring that ancient savages were as lazy as their descendants, I've traced out just about the most probable line either trading or looting-parties from here would travel on. We break camp tomorrow."

That expedition moved like clockwork. One group of muleteers headed back to the coast with pack-mules loaded with artifacts from this first site. They'd get more supplies and come on to the next dig. The others would be already working on it. Marshall was systematic. Efficient. He knew what he was doing.

THEY followed jungle trails for three days, cutting some of them for themselves. On the way Marshall looked over the ground as well as anybody could in jungle country, and shook his head. Then he stopped and got out the induction-balances. You know what they are. These had been made to locate land-mines and dud shells in the war, and he'd stepped them up to make them really sensitive. This was their first use in archaeology.

He spent a half-day fussing with them,

and crude pots and stone axes and such stuff. They were just as bright and shining as if they'd been taken off a hardware store shelf that morning. That stainless steel is a very good alloy!

"All of them identical," said Marshall meditatively when the last was up. "Mass production. Apsley says twenty thousand years ago! More of them here than farther east. We'll keep going west."

"Listen, Marshall," Burroughs said rather helplessly. "I dug one of those knives out of



"*Mas de aeroplanos, señor!*" cried the peon who had been set to watch the time-machine, as he pointed and turned to Marshall and Apsley

with workmen cutting paths for him with their machetes. Then he set men to work digging three wells. He said they were wells, but they weren't.

Nine feet down in one hole, twelve in another, and only seven in a third, they found more steel knives—with pottery and stone arrow-heads. Apsley and Burroughs unearthed them in person at the bottoms of the three holes. The earth was absolutely undisturbed, and they were mixed with ashes

the ground myself. And I know it's been there all along. But I still don't believe it! What do you expect to find?"

"Where they were made," Marshall said.

Burroughs knew his primitive man.

"But look," he said helplessly. "With metal like that, a race would have an enormous advantage over flint-and-pottery tribes. They couldn't be wiped out. How could an art like that be lost? You know and I know that there simply aren't any lost arts."

Marshall was spreading out his air-mosaic photographic maps. He whistled a little, soundlessly.

"I've been called all sorts of names about that first knife. If I told you, even now, what I think, you'd take me back to the coast to a doctor. Have you tried to use one?"

Burroughs picked up a knife, and Apsley another. They puttered with them while Marshall went over his maps. All around them was the camp of the *peons*, who had been paid well for something over five weeks, and had only worked—so they considered—for about two. A very cheerful place, that camp. There was jungle all about, but with insecticide bombs and various gadgets that came out of the war to make jungle fighting possible, jungle camping wasn't bad at all.

"Mighty unhandy, these knives," Apsley said, presently. "How would you hold 'em?"

Burroughs swallowed.

"Marshall!" he said. "They don't fit my hands. There isn't any sense to it."

"I know," said Marshall. "There isn't. Look—I'm going to head for this place. It's over a hundred miles away and the going will be rough. But if there was ever a spot designed for a city site inland, that would be it. I'm going to take a chance and go straight there."

He went away to talk to the brown skinned man who bossed his labor force. He had forty Indian workmen who were eating high, loafing plenty, and getting paid for it. They thought Marshall was a cross between a wacky fool and Santa Claus.

Presently Marshall came back to where Apsley and Burroughs sat staring at each other.

"Marshall!" said Burroughs. "These knives weren't designed for people to use. What were they? Ceremonial?"

"You guess," said Marshall. "My guess is crazy."

"They're awkward to hold," Burroughs insisted. "Hang it, you can't get a real grip on them. And your primitive man may have been ignorant, but he was a practical cuss. He wouldn't make knives like this."

"No," Marshall agreed. "Primitive man wouldn't."

"He couldn't, if he was primitive," put in Apsley. "And, primitive or civilized, men simply wouldn't make knives with handles that were so unhandy to hold. But here they are."

"Yes," said Marshall. "That's the question

that bothers me."

Burroughs and Apsley blinked at him.

"I don't get it," Burroughs complained.

"The metal is wrong," Marshall explained. "Men back in those days didn't know how to make steel, especially stainless steel, and still more especially a better alloy than we've worked out for ourselves. But the handles are even more wrong. Men wouldn't have made knives like these even if they could. So the question is, who—or what—did make them? And what happened to a civilization with that much of a head-start over our ancestors?"

Shame-faced, the other white men looked at each other. Archaeology isn't a very practical science, perhaps, but there's a lot of hard common sense used in it.

"Let's forget it," Apsley said irritably, after an instant's glance. "Or we'll all go crazy wondering. The thing to do is find out where these knives come from."

"Yes," said Marshall. "I made quite a lot of money out of that first knife, but I'm willing to spend it all to find that out. And somehow I'm afraid I'm not going to like what I find."

CHAPTER II

Weird Vehicle

IT TOOK over a week to get to the place Marshall had picked out as a perfect site for an inland city. On the way they were all pretty tactful. They didn't mention the knives a single time. They talked about the scenery—which was all lush jungle and thoroughly monotonous—and about the grub which was adequate but abominably cooked.

Sometimes they discussed archaeology. But they never talked about the three knives. They had plenty of time to dodge the subject, too.

It was a little over a hundred miles airline to their destination, but they had to go roundabout. They would never have found it but for the air-maps.

At last, though, they came out into a valley with a lake in it. It was a curious sort of lake. It was almost exactly circular, and was bordered with a stretch of savannah-grass growing where the lake level apparently rose and fell with the seasons.

The valley opened out on a level plain ten miles across—cleared, it would have been perfect agricultural country—and then all the ground got tumbled again and there were mountains in every direction.

In the days before airplanes, it would have been beautifully isolated. A city or even a civilization could grow up there and last for a thousand years without anybody from the outer world having any reason to enter it. As a matter of fact, Marshall and the others never did find any direct evidence that human beings had ever been there before. But the indirect evidence was upsetting.

The valley was plain jungle. There were no pyramids or impressive ruins in view. But Marshall hadn't expected them. He relied on his induction balances. As they descended into the valley he had some good looks over the jungle-top and his expression was satisfied. They made camp near a small stream a half-hour before sundown. Apsley saw Marshall's look of contentment.

"You think there's something here?"

Marshall nodded.

"This sort of jungle usually grows pretty even on top," he observed. "Here there are some places where it humps up. I think we've got a real find."

Apsley hesitated a moment. "Marshall, I hope we don't find anything!" he said.

"I'll bet," said Marshall, "that I can find indications with an induction balance before sundown."

That would be less than half an hour. Apsley didn't answer. He meant it when he said he hoped they wouldn't find anything. The handle of a knife can mean a lot to a trained archaeologist. The handles on those stainless-steel knives were—not right.

But Marshall got out an induction balance, checked the dry-cell batteries, and put on the headphones. He swung the thing about a couple of times and then moved cautiously through the thick growth around the space his men were clearing even then.

All of a sudden the headphones nearly deafened him.

He jerked them off and rubbed his ears.

"I got it!" he said. "Right there."

He pointed. There was a monstrous hard-wood tree where he pointed. It had huge, thick, gnarled roots, and above where one of the roots went underground there was a sort of mound, as if the root were lifting a rock as it swelled. The mound dripped vines, and things grew out of it, but—there's a sixth

sense that comes to a man who's done a lot of digging.

"Just for the devil of it, I'm going to see what that is," said Marshall. "It's near the surface, anyhow. Send a couple of men over here with spades, won't you?"

Apsley went back. He was a little bit pale. He sent a couple of the *peons* over with shovels which they hauled off a mule-pack. Marshall was already poking at the mass. Things were crawling and squirming and popping out of the tangled root-stuff. You never know how many living things there are until you start poking around in a tropical jungle. Marshall grabbed one of the shovels and thrust in a couple of times, and there came a ring of metal.

Marshall kept his head, of course. He didn't interfere with the making of camp. But he had flares burning around that thing after sundown, and a dozen men working at it. Then he put the whole gang on the job and moved it to the cleared space. Then he and Apsley and Burroughs looked at it.

BUT IT wasn't like anything any archaeologist had ever dug up before. It was what you might call a vehicle of some sort. It was not too large, maybe seven feet long and four feet wide. It didn't have wheels. It had something that might have been a caterpillar tread, only there had been other metals than stainless steel built into that part of it, and they were gone in crumbled masses of corrosion.

Most of the bottom had been left underground when the vehicle was heaved up. After all, it had been buried a good many thousand years. Twenty thousand of them, by Apsley's estimate. And at that period there wasn't any human civilization, which made the thing even more disturbing.

"I think that we are now faced with the question," Marshall said.

Burroughs knew primitive man, but he stared at that thing helplessly.

"It's an artifact, but its purpose is beyond me," he said dubiously.

Apsley looked sick.

"I have a feeling that we'd better get away from here," he said slowly.

Marshall glanced at him.

"I mean it," said Apsley. He looked wretched. "I—have hunches sometimes. I guess you'd call this a hunch. Once I felt this way about a monolith in Petra. The cursed thing had been standing for a couple

of thousand years. But I had a feeling that it ought to be kept away from. I was ashamed to say anything about it. One day it crumbled and crushed two Arab workmen. I've got a feeling that there's something wrong here. That we'd better get away. If I could, I'd strike camp and leave tonight. I don't know why. I just feel that way!"

Marshall nodded.

"It does feel creepy to look at this contrivance. I suppose you might as well call it an automobile. You notice it has two seats."

"But it can't be an automobile," Burroughs said indignantly. "Other plain facts aside, it's too small."

"For human beings, yes," Marshall said.

Burroughs swallowed with a sort of clicking noise. Apsley and he had carefully skirted that point in their own minds. The knife-handles had been wrong. Now there was this thing, which was a vehicle, with two queerly-shaped places in it that could only be seats. But not seats designed for human beings. And not conceivably for human adults.

The three white men were very still for a while. Then they elaborately got to work. No engine was visible, and they looked for it. They found only corrosion, and no gears or cylinders or any trace of them. Presently Marshall pointed out bits of greenish-colored rust that still clung to a bright-metal shaft. Apsley was staring at something else about the thing, then.

"This might be the motor, or one of them," Marshall said. "Anybody who could make an alloy that would stay bright underground all this time would be past using gears. He'd put motors wherever he needed power."

"That is a guess, but it is no guess that this is not primitive," Burroughs said stolidly.

"Hardly," said Marshall. "You can't say primitive after you look at these decorations."

Apsley retched, suddenly. The others felt like doing the same thing. Because—have you ever looked at those "optical illusions" that are sometimes printed in believe-it-or-not newspaper features?

You look at them, and now they look this way, and now they look that way, and you wind up with your eyes dazed because you can't decide which way they're supposed to look.

The decorations cast in the bright metal of this thing were something like that. Only instead of making your eyes hurt they did something else to you. The lines and masses

were distinct. Horribly so. And you tried to find a meaning in them, and you wound up with an inchoate mass of emotional impressions of which you were partly ashamed, and part of which nauseated you.

"I don't think that human beings are responsible for this art-work," Marshall said judicially. "After all, there is an inherent decency in the human race, however often we doubt it. Also, when we set out to be nasty it's usually a matter of simple nastinesses. We don't often blend them."

BURROUGHS snorted disdainfully. "It's not primitive," he repeated unnecessarily. "It's a sort of art, and it's highly civilized. Primitive painting is simple and representative. There's no attempt at heightening the effect of one color by the use of another. Primitive music is simple, too. It's your civilized man who mixes colors and sounds for more urgent effects. This stuff is—well—emotional, as all art is. But this has mixed up things that suggest all the most violent and unpleasant emotions possible, and they're blended so that they gain force by contrast with each other. It's a high stage of art, but it's not to human taste. The —creatures who liked this wouldn't be nice company."

Marshall's voice took on a shade of grimness.

"Anyhow they're all dead. And one of their knives was important to our civilization. There's more stuff around that might be important, too."

"I still feel that hunch that we'd be better off away from this place," Apley said sickishly. "There's no sense to it, but I feel it strongly."

Marshall looked thoughtful. After all, a man who's spent years digging up things that dead men left behind realizes that there are feelings and feelings. Your experienced archaeologist is a hard-headed man, and a severely practical one, but there are limits to his incredulity. Looking at Apley's face and knowing what he did of him, Marshall didn't dismiss the hunch utterly. It was a fact. As a fact, it should be weighed in.

"We'll go to sleep," he said after cogitation. "I'll post a couple of sentries, just in case, and we'll get to work in the morning. It's hard to understand how a civilization as far advanced as this one could have died out without leaving a trace!"

During the night all three of the white

men awoke abruptly. There was a queer throbbing in the air. It wasn't a sound. It wasn't a vibration of the earth. It was a sort of pulsation just below the lowest note that the human ear can catch.

Pete Marshall got up and went out of the tent.

There was a fire burning and two of the *peons* were playing some mysterious game with things that looked like dice but weren't. They were the sentries, watching—so they considered—against animals who might raid the mule-corral or the supplies.

"*Un temblor, señor,*" one of them said tranquilly. "*Pero un poquito.*"

An earthquake, but a little one.

Marshall knew it wasn't so, but he said nothing. The pulsation died gradually away. He went back into his tent.

All three of the white men lay awake. They could hear the two *peons* talking over their game. Speaking to the white men they used fairly intelligible Spanish, but among themselves they used a mixture of Spanish with the remnants of a vocabulary that was pure Maya.

They were quite amiable about their play. One in particular was cracking jokes and chuckling over his own witticisms, poor devil.

Marshall rather envied them their peace of mind. Apsley's hunch worried him. He almost shared it. That art-work! But when a civilization has been dead for twenty thousand years, it's dead! It can't be dangerous! Still—well—it wasn't a pleasant thing to think about.

While the three Americans were at breakfast, the pulsation came again. Apsley noticed it first. You couldn't hear it. You felt it, mostly in your chest. It grew louder and louder—no "louder" isn't the word. It grew stronger, with a swift rise to a peak of amplitude. Then it died as swiftly away again. That was all.

"Something new, there," Marshall said. "I wonder."

Neither Burroughs nor Apsley made any comment. There simply wasn't anything to say. Marshall concentrated on the problem.

"Here!" he said abruptly. "Counting in everything, including your hunch, Apsley, I've come to a conclusion that hurts. We're archaeologists, and that's all. We've a smattering of the other things archaeology calls



One of the searchlight things turned until it was pointed at Juan, who exploded into incandescent steam

for, but no more. If the thing we found last night is an automobile of sorts, it needs a specialist to work on it. We can handle rotted fabrics and such things, with paraffin, and I've even done a little with the electrolytic restoration of corroded objects. But I wouldn't know how to set about preserving or restoring a complicated piece of machinery that had been buried for twenty thousand years. There's never been anything like this before. So I think we'd better go back and get some really good men on this job."

APSLEY drew a deep breath. But Burroughs objected, frowning.

"That's a rather drastic decision to make on one artifact!"

"It's a rather drastic artifact," Marshall said drily. "I took a knife, and made what they tell me will be practically a new industry. Here's an automobile or a reasonably distorted facsimile of one. What will it do to our civilization? I suspect this place calls for a group of physicists with training in archaeology and jungle-camping."

"At least that," Apsley said quietly. "But we can't take this thing back. We wouldn't be believed any more than you were, photographs regardless."

"True enough," Marshall agreed. "So we'll take the induction balances and spread out, making a sort of map of any indications we find. If we find one place where the indications are especially promising, we'll make a complete dig of the one area. Or else we'll make a group of small digs until we get something convincing. In other words, we cut down our sights. We'll admit that we're only scouting. We won't try to do more than size up the job, and prove it's worth doing. Right?"

Apsley's face was still strained.

"That's reasonable," he admitted. "It's sane. But I wish I felt it was enough. I've still got the hunch that we ought to get the devil away from here."

Marshall laughed, but he was not altogether at ease. Apsley wasn't a moody man. He was a quiet, level-headed, and thoroughly capable field man. But some people do have hunches which are sound. You don't talk archaeological shop without hearing about hunches which worked out. And the decorations on the thing which the tree had lifted out of the ground, they were very, very upsetting. No one would enjoy looking at them very long.

Again the expedition moved like clock-work. A camp party went on clearing a camping space, and three other gangs set out with Apsley and Burroughs and Marshall. Each of the three took an induction balance, which could be adjusted to register a dime ten feet underground. They spread out fan-wise, machete-men going on ahead. But in an hour they were all together again, staring.

"I got indications in a practically continuous line," Apsley said calmly. "There's as much metal underground here as there'd be if New York were buried under this jungle."

"I think my detector is out of order," Burroughs said irritably. "A primitive culture simply couldn't have this much metal! It's too much!"

Marshall's eyes were very queer.

"They used to measure the technical position of nations by the amount of sulphuric acid they used in industry," he said irrelevantly. "Nowadays it's been suggested that light metals would be a better index. But the only metal that would be metal after even eight thousand years—let alone the twenty Apsley estimates—would be that stainless steel the—inhabitants of this city knew how to make. By that test, these inhabitants had a culture as high as a modern one. What destroyed it? What could?"

Burroughs was bewildered, and indignant because he was bewildered. Apsley was very pale.

"It wasn't a human civilization," Apsley said suddenly. "I'm sure it wasn't. Marshall, I'm getting scared!"

"We could change our plans yet again," Marshall said slowly. "Grab up a few artifacts—we can get them quickly enough—and pull out of here in a hurry. We can't do a real job by ourselves, that's sure. We could try only to get evidence of the job that needs to be done."

"I'm not quite that scared," said Apsley. "But the sooner we're away the better I'll feel."

"We'll start from the lake," Marshall said decisively. "The city would surely front on that. We'll go around the lakeshore and find out if it was built up all around. Then spread out toward the perimeter. If it's as big as this concentration of metal would seem to imply, there'd be more metal in a dense population than in a small one. We can't hope even to map it. But maybe we can find out how big the city was."

So far they had seen one artifact, and the

rest was jungle. But they knew. Silently, they started off again. The lakeshore was half swampy. No trees grew there. Machetes were not needed to clear the way. It was, incredibly enough, absolutely without indication of metal. For a hundred yards beyond it, in the jungle, the detectors registered absolutely nothing. There would come small, sporadic indications. Then, abruptly, masses of metal in such quantities as would be turned up by detectors going over the very heart of a modern city which had been bombed to rubble and covered over with vegetation.

"D'you know," Marshall said, that night, "when you consider this lake—I'd like to have soundings of it—the indications we get are just what we'd find if a whopping big city had been destroyed by—say—a single bomb of fifty or sixty thousand tons of TNT dropped in its middle! That would account for the lake and the absence of metal anywhere near it. The lake would be a bomb-crater. But what a bomb!"

There was a sudden throbbing in the air. It grew to a fierce intensity and there were cries from the *peons* in the encampment.

"*Señores! Señores! Un aeroplano! Alla! Monstroso!*"

As the three white men came out into the sunset, the sensation of pulsations in the air suddenly diminished. And there were renewed cries from the *peons*.

They babbled excitedly. After all, they had seen airplanes many times. Not many parts of the world haven't. They were not alarmed. They described a huge, shining thing in mid-air over a place near the center of the lake. It was *un aeroplano*, but they had not seen its wings. And it had vanished like magic. It must have been traveling very fast indeed...

Apsley was white as a sheet. But he set his teeth grimly and tried to discuss the apparition calmly. None of the three white men had even glimpsed it, but all the *peons* had, and their descriptions tallied.

The discussion got nowhere at all.

Plenty of metal. They attacked an almost overhanging side of the mound and cut through five feet of matted climbers and three feet of mould. Then they struck stone.

They widened the face of their attack and reached a doorway, choked with mould and the roots that had grown inward through milleniums. The doorway was four feet high. Six feet in they came upon emptiness, a choking, fetid open space filled with the rank smell of corruption twice corrupt.

Marshall, gagging, set a charge of powder to burn inside. It would leave a sulphurous reek, but at least it would drive out the stench of ages.

In an hour they were able to go in. Two men came back from the camp with a sixty-pound portable generator and strings of wire and lights. Things slithered away from the lights before the advance of the men who found themselves in a huge room, completely intact after thousands of years.

On the walls were panels of bright stainless steel. There were heaps of greenish oxide here and there, interspersed with dark-gray powder. There was a hole in the roof of this room, and emptiness above it, under which was another heap of rust and fragments of the same bright steel.

No stairs were to be seen. There were other low doorways, leading to other rooms. Some of those, also, had openings which once had led to the outer air. They were choked with serpentine, clutching roots which fumbled inward in complete futility. Pete Marshall saw one patch where ceiling had fallen and bright metal showed through.

"My gosh!" he said. "Steel-frame construction! Twenty thousand years ago! And what sort of concrete would last this long?"

He went on by himself. He vanished. The others looked about them.

There was a jabbering. The *peons* had gathered before a bright-steel panel on the wall. It depicted a human being, in exact anatomical accuracy. He strained in agony, and about the figure were more designs like those on the artifact of the night before.

They were not conventional and not stylized. They conveyed their meaning directly and without symbolism, as music conveys emotions without words. The designs conveyed emotions which, somehow, made a normal human being ashamed and sick.

"Subjective art," Apsley said in a queer tone. "They moulded their emotional sensations direct. My stars!"

CHAPTER III

Messenger of Terror

EARLY the next day they set to work upon a huge mound a good half-mile from the lake's edge. There was metal in it.

"Interesting cranial index, Apsley," Burroughs said. "An Indian, of course. His skull-shape reminds me of the ones in the Aleutian digs. Blasted fine work! See, that sandal he's wearing looks like the remnants we found back there where Marshall picked up the first knife. Here's a contemporary portrait of a pre-Mayan of the culture we dug up." Then he asked abruptly, as if surprised: "What's he afraid of?"

The figure conveyed fear and terror in its pose. That was all. But the background—or was it the background?—was moulded designs which were not pictures of anything at all, but told much. The only possible analogy was to music.

As chords are grave or gay, melancholy or inspiriting, the indicated forms conveyed impressions. The figure alone might have been a man struggling against an unseen obstacle. The figure and those designs together gave the feeling of a human being in the grip of such terror and such unthinkable horror—horror far past the fear of death—horror even beyond madness.

The peons had chattered excitedly at first recognition of the figure as an Indian recognizably like themselves. But gradually the chattering stopped. They stared at the plaque as the background made its impact. One or two crossed themselves. They drew away from it, uneasily.

"There's another," said Apsley. "Hideous beasts!"

Burroughs, again, looked at this human figure from the standpoint of a student of primitive man. This figure was at bay with a stone axe. His antagonist or antagonists did not appear. Only the man, with abstract designs about him which uncannily conveyed the feeling of despair. And such despair! The peons murmured as they saw it.

"Quaint," Apsley said. "They made humans the subject of their art, or the occasion of it."

Somehow the bas-reliefs made certain that men had not made them. Burroughs was busily making notes.

"Remember 'Stag at Bay'?" he said abruptly. "They might like to watch humans in emotional situations, as we like to watch animals."

Apsley found a third plaque. It was indescribable. There were two figures, and the emotional effect would send throbbing rage through the veins of any man who looked at it.

THEN Marshall came in through a doorway he had to stoop almost double to use. His expression was very strange indeed.

"You chaps come along," he said in an odd, choked voice. "I've something to show you." He spoke abruptly in Spanish to the crowding peons, ordering them to clear the entry place more thoroughly. He led off through the doorway he'd returned by. The others followed. Marshall turned on a flashlight and flung its beam before him. Something slithered out of the room.

"I—don't want them to see this," Marshall said jerkily. "There's a ramp here. Listen! This place was really built! It hasn't collapsed. It's a ruin because the whole top part was shattered by something. Something like an explosion. The thing I've got to show you—"

He swallowed. They came to the ramp. It went up and up, with what might have been a handrail save that it was hardly more than a foot above the ramp level. The air was not wholly clear, here. The odor of incalculable age and dampness and fetor was all about. There was a musky smell. But Marshall led the archaeologists, flashing the light ahead and breathing quickly.

"It isn't possible!" he said feverishly. "When were the laws of perspective worked out? Fourteen hundred? Fifteen hundred? Before that nobody could draw perspective. They simply didn't know how. Then somebody found out, and everybody knew. As soon as they'd seen it done once, they all knew how."

He bent low and almost crawled through an opening under the four-foot height of the doorways on the lower level. He stood in darkness, swallowing noisily as the others joined him.

"This is going to be hard to take," he said thickly. "The implications are incredible. It explains why Apsley feels that we ought to get away. It explains everything! But it is going to be hard to take."

Then he turned on the flashlight again. There was a mass of glistening stainless steel, mirror-bright, utterly untarnished, only faintly dulled by a coating of impalpable dust.

"You'll see it better if you turn on your lights, too," he said hoarsely. "It will take a minute or two to get what it's all about. But it's not a machine. It's—art, maybe. It must have been made just to be looked at."

Two other flashlight beams came on. They

played upon the intricate array of solidified abstract designs about a central mass of metal. This was not in relief but in the round, and the designs were fined out and not repeated so that, from any angle the central mass of metal could be seen. They varied from one end of the mass to the other, too.

"But what is it?" That was Apsley. Then he said angrily: "My gosh! What artists! And what beasts!"

Absorbed Burroughs blinked at it.

"This is a new trick," he said. "At this end it's an infant. At that end it's an old woman. In between it's all the other ages. But I—I see the whole figure of the infant, and the whole figure of the old woman, and everything else. . . . Look at that! Here's where she changes her dress from that of a child to a marriageable woman. Primitive, but you can make it out. There she changes to a matron's hair style. There . . . What the devil is this, Marshall?"

"It's perspective," Marshall said in a curiously taut voice. "Look! We can take a series of pictures of a child as it grows up. In each one, in two dimensions we can give a perspective of three. If we stack a series of pictures of one person at different ages, we've got a series of two-dimensional sections of them. Looking at them one after the other, we can get a sort of vague idea that they're all the same person, and conceive somehow of a person growing up and growing old. But we won't get perspective. We can't make one three-dimensioned image which blends them all. But these creatures—whatever they were—they did!"

"Look at this detail, Marshall," Burroughs said eagerly. "I could write a book about the costumes and hair-dress styles alone. It's a biography of a pre-Mayan woman."

"Confound them," Apsley said harshly. "They've used the emotions of a child for contrast to adolescent imaginings, and the thrilling happiness of early marriage, and—and—blast them—they've gloated over everything that's horrible in human life. They've even pointed up their gloating by contrasting it with the dreams of young people! I'd like to smash the rotten thing. I'd like to wipe it out!"

MARSHALL faced them, with the same tautness in his manner.

"But you miss the point," he said. "Listen, you chaps. We can't take three dimensions and give a perspective of four because we've

never had the right viewpoint. But whoever made this had. Does it occur to you that the laws of perspective were discovered when the *camera obscura* was invented? When artists saw perspective they could paint it! If you think, you'll realize that you don't see this Indian woman from the front, or back, or from above, or below. You see her from time. You see all her ages at once! You see her from a fourth dimension! Now—how the deuce did these creatures learn how a human being looks from a dimension that's none of the three we know?"

There was silence. Marshall snapped off his flashlight. Apsley did the same. Burroughs reluctantly pointed to the doorway with his flash so they could stoop to go through it.

The *peons* were outside. Some of them were working to clear a better entrance to the hollow mound. The others were frankly loafing. There was nothing for them to do, and the plaques on the wall made them uncomfortable. So they had come out into the sunlight. Marshall nodded.

"I don't want to disturb those heaps of rust which aren't stainless steel," he said curtly. "There may be some way of getting those heaps of rust back to something like their original form. But it will take a technique that hasn't been worked out yet. Let's go back and camp and think."

He gave orders. His men piled cut *llianas* and brush over the opening they had cleared. It would keep any large animal out, and snakes and such already had ingress. They fell in behind the white men on the way back to camp. *Señor* Marshall was a good man to work for. He had rubber-tired wheelbarrows, and he did not try to keep men busy when there was no work to do. Moreover, he knew, always, exactly what he wanted done and explained it simply.

They had reached the edge of the lake when Marshall paused abruptly.

"A *camera-obscura* threw objects in three dimensions into perspective in two dimensions," he said. "Then artists were able to duplicate the trick. These creatures must have had something that threw objects in four dimensions into perspective in three. I'm just as scared as you are now, Apsley. Those devils were civilized! They made steel that was better than any we knew how to make, and this art of theirs is amazing. And before you could visualize four dimensions in perspective in three, you'd have to have some

command of four dimensions."

"And that means—what?" Apsley asked.

"An impossibility," Marshall snapped. "It would lead to a time-machine."

They walked along the lake-shore. It was perfectly round, that lake.

"That had been a tall building," Marshall said almost fretfully. "The bottom was intact. The level above the one where we were was smashed. What could smash a building of this size. Probably make a lake such as this besides? Fifty thousand tons of TNT going off at once? What destroyed this city? How could such a civilization fall? It should have been invincible against anything contemporary, and if they had weapons to match their other stuff, even modern men would be hard put to it to beat them."

The enigmatic pulsation of the air began. One felt it mostly in his chest. It was faint at first, but it grew stronger and stronger.

"*Señores! El aeroplano!*"

The *peons* babbled the words, pointing. Marshall turned, the others with him. And there in mid-air above the center of the circular lake they saw the thing. It was the mirror-bright of stainless steel. It was perhaps fifty feet long by twenty thick, and it had no wings or propellers or landing-gear.

Along its sides were great doors, not faired into smoothness, but strictly utilitarian. Also there were folded-up things beneath, like the legs of a giant grasshopper, but more complicated and smaller in proportion to the size of the thing.

As they gaped at it, it vanished, fading into cloudiness and then into nothingness within seconds. The throbbing pulsations died away.

"Did you say impossible?" Apsley asked very quietly. "That was a time-machine, Marshall. It couldn't be anything else. When I saw it, I knew! That's what I'm afraid of."

"It was going through," Marshall said grimly. "That changes everything. It could probably stop here. Where—the—devil does it go? I hope it doesn't come back."

But it did.

CHAPTER IV

The Idiot Indian

NEXT morning Pete Marshall looked as if he hadn't slept. At breakfast he scowled savagely.

"I admit it, I'm scared out," he said. "We're going to make a dash over to the place we got into yesterday. We're going to take out what plaques we can, and that abomination upstairs. Then we're going back to the coast. With that art-work to show, we'll be believed. The Mexican Government has sense in such matters, anyhow. We'll come back here with a regiment of soldiers to guard against possible unauthorized looters. We'll have a couple of anti-aircraft guns, mounted to command the lake. Then we'll see what we see."

Apsley drew a deep breath. Burroughs looked stubborn, but he kept his mouth shut.

"If I know humans, those plaques are going to rate as super-modernistic art," Apsley said after a moment. "Being twenty thousand years old they'd fetch prices that will knock your eyes out. They'll go in museums. But personally, I wouldn't want to have any of them in a house I lived in!"

Marshall glowered.

"When we say we were scared away by a time-machine, how many kinds of liars will they call us?"

"Who cares?" Apsley shrugged. "Frankly, I don't think the danger is to us alone. As you said, if they had—have—had weapons on a par with the rest of their culture, they're plenty dangerous."

Marshall made an angry gesture. That was really what was in his mind. He finished his breakfast in silence. He ordered the camp equipment packed by a gang he left behind. But the three white men, with most of the *peons*, went down to the lake and headed around its border for the mound into which they'd dug an entrance.

They were three-quarters of the way there, with the *peons* straggling in their wake along the half-swampy shore, when the queer throbbing sounded in the air once more.

The men faced the lake, expectantly. Instinctively the white men turned their eyes in the same direction.

There was a cloudiness in the air, which thickened as the throbbing grew more intense.

Suddenly the fifty-foot metal hull flashed into view. It was a good sixty feet above the water.

It stayed in view for two seconds or thereabouts, and vanished again. The throbbing died away.

The *peons* babbled. Then they came on. It

was *un aeroplano*. It was mysterious. But while they had seen airplanes or heard of them enough not to be afraid of them, they did not know them well enough to realize that this was something else.

Apsley was white as they resumed their march. Marshall ground his teeth. There were only two things they could do: run away at once or do as they had planned; take some artifacts and get out quickly, or clear out without anything at all. They went on to the mound.

They moved with speed, at that. Burroughs assumed charge of three men and began to chip one bright-steel plaque out of the wall inside the mound. Apsley set to work with others on a second plaque. Marshall equipped six of them with poles and canvas and went to try to man-handle the round sculpture—if you could call it that—down the ramp. He hoped to be able to sling it in a sort of litter between two mules and get it to the coast that way. All of them set to work.

Marshall could hear nothing at all, deep in the mound with ten to twenty feet of mould and vegetation above him, atop an unguessed-at depth of folded, shattered masonry. Apsley and Burroughs could hear little more. They may have heard the throbbing return, but it was muted, and would hardly be felt distinctly through the four-foot doorway and the tunnel from the open air. It stopped.

Apsley worked on grimly. He did not turn his head. He had a feeling that something was wrong, but he'd had such an idea all along. There was nothing to be done but finish the job and get away from this place.

Burroughs went stolidly about his task, noting as he worked new details of anthropological interest in the bas-relief he was loosening from the wall. Neither of them, of course, paid any attention to the *peons* who had no immediate usefulness within the mound and so stayed outside. Apsley, afterward, thought he remembered an excited babbling, but then he was engrossed in what to him was the distasteful task of taking down the revolting plaque from the wall.

MARSHALL'S task, in its essentials, was the easiest. The Indian-woman art object simply had to be swathed in canvas, lifted from its base—though that was a job—and then wrangled onto stout sticks and through the doorway, down the ramp and

then through two other doors.

But it was hair-raising to try to do it without hitting any of the designs which surrounded it. The task had to be performed step-by-step, with men balancing the mass on either side and keeping it from sliding or rolling or lurching cater-cornered out of sheer clumsiness.

Marshall and his helpers were sweating freely when they got it into the big room they'd first entered. Apsley had his first plaque down. Burroughs was almost as far advanced.

"These men have worked long enough," Marshall said. "I'll call in some others to start it toward camp."

He bent down and went out-of-doors. There was nobody near. He stared about him. The *peons* had vanished. Completely.

Then he saw the thing above the lake.

It was out there above the middle of the water. It was just what they had seen, and just in the same place. The contrivances like grasshopper-legs had unfolded incredibly. They reached down, thin and spidery, to and into the water. They actually upheld the mirror-bright cylinder in the exact spot in mid-air where before it had appeared—and vanished.

Directly underneath the cylinder there was a floating object which was certainly new to the lake. There were huddled figures on it. Human figures. The *peons*, who half an hour since had been cheerfully loafing before the entrance to the mound, were out there.

Then Marshall saw thinning smoke coming from the jungle by the lake's edge. It was white, stifling smoke. And tropic jungle does not catch fire. Not in Yucatan!

In three minutes Marshall had settled on a plan and given orders. The *peons* were to use their machetes and cut a way through the jungle to the camp, avoiding the shore. Apsley and Burroughs would go with them.

Apsley quietly refused. Burroughs swore, but one of the three white men had to go. The men were to be gotten out of the camp. To the devil with equipment. Get the men away! They could wait out of sight, with a courier service ready to tell them when to run, if necessary. Burroughs would remain somewhere near the camp, taking photographs if he could. He would use his judgment but he was to get out with news of what had happened, and pictures if possible.

"That thing can't fly, or it wouldn't stay out there in the middle of the lake like a

stork," Marshall said grimly. "It appeared before in that exact spot, remember. I suspect it has to. I'm going to see what I can do, but if anything happens, this'll be a job for bombing planes."

He watched the men disappear into the jungle, single file and bent over, the lead man slashing a way through creepers and vines for the rest. With no burdens and no need to cut more than space for one man to squeeze through, they could travel swiftly—for jungle work.

Marshall started grimly for the lakeshore. Apsley went with him.

"You're a fool," Marshall said angrily. "You should get out and back up Burroughs' story!"

"The *peons* thought that thing was a plane," Apsley said irrelevantly. "It put down those legs, and they thought that was all right too. Next the floating thing came ashore, and they piled down to meet the *aeronauticos*. And then something happened. There was a fire somewhere. And why are they left floating on the lake? Why weren't they taken up into the thing? There ought to be room enough. Those doors along the side look like cargo-hatches."

Something stirred alongside the mirror-bright object. Then two things went dangling downward along ropes. One was plainly a human being. The other was much smaller, and there was mirror-brightness about it. But it had members, and they moved as if purposefully.

The two dangling objects, the one human, the other something else, halted fifteen feet above the floating object. Human figures gesticulated wildly from the float. Sunlight flashed on metal. They were waving machetes. A faint, faint ululation came over the water. The men on the floating thing screamed defiance—imprecations—threats.

HERE were puffs of steam from the surface of the water. Marshall swore. His hands were clenched. He broke into a run.

"But what are you going to do?" Apsley asked, pelting along beside him.

"I don't know," Marshall cried. "But I've got to do something."

He reached the edge of the water. He shouted furiously, and there was an answering chorus of cries from the *peons* on the float. One of them suddenly flung himself overboard. Then there was a jetting of steam from the surface of the lake. Then cries.

The man sullenly swam back and hauled himself onto the float again.

Marshall roared imprecations, the more furious because futile. He had no boat. He had a revolver. Back at camp there were some sporting-rifles, and a certain amount of explosive such as he'd used to make a crater at the first dig. There were cameras and induction-balances and rubber-tired wheelbarrows. But there were no weapons with which to attack anything like this!

High up, on the brightly-polished thing, an object moved. It was so small that one could only be sure that some object was moving. But instantly thereafter there came a burst of unbearable heat, and a section of green jungle to Marshall's right erupted into flame. A pause, and a second section erupted volcano-like on his left. Then another pause, and treetops overhead exploded horribly.

Marshall ground his teeth and clenched his hands. But no fourth flare of heat appeared.

"That was to scare me, so I'd stay here until they're ready to come after me," he said in an icy voice, "Sneak away through the jungle, Apsley! Tell Burroughs the creatures have heat-rays. All he knows is primitive man. That's important information."

"He couldn't help seeing," Apsley said calmly.

There were no more outcries from the *peons* on the float beneath the time-machine. The dangling thing which was not human—it was wearing armor of some sort—continued to hang at the end of the cable ten or fifteen feet from the float.

Once, Marshall almost believed that he saw a cord leading from it to the float. The human figure had been replaced among its fellows. The *peons* shifted their positions. They were not under restraint, except from swimming ashore. They still had their machetes.

Time passed. A long, long time. Marshall fumed. Then a man leaped overboard and swam strongly for the shore. No jets of steam sprang up to check him. A second man, a third and fourth and fifth. The rest remained on the float.

"They're turned loose," Marshall said, scowling. "At least they were allowed to leave."

"Why not all of them?"

"Maybe they can't swim," Marshall growled. "We'll go and see what they have to say."

He stalked along the lakeshore, thrusting

through the savannah-grass that grew at the edge.

There was no further threatening stab of heat. Half a mile on, they found the first of the *peons* just wading out of the water. He was scared, but he still had his wits about him.

Apsley had guessed correctly. They had seen the thing appear above the lake. Something like a boat had come toward the shore. They'd gone down to meet the *aeronauticos*. When the *peons* saw the stranger-creatures they were frightened, because they seemed so small.

When they would have fled, the jungle burst into flame all around them, and four tiny figures in metal suits—"como plata, señor"—like silver—had rounded them up, driving them onto the queerly shaped craft. One man, maddened by fear, had tried to attack the creatures with his machete. Instantly he screamed with pain. One arm and part of his breast seemed to burst into steam. He was out on the float now, moaning.

The rounded-up *peons* had been taken out to the stilt-supported object, and one of them hauled aloft. Half an hour later—just now—he'd come down with a strange expression on his face, wearing a metal cap upon his head. He said that the people of the *aeroplano* were friends, *muy generoso*, and admirable persons.

Since jets of steam had just kept one of them from escaping, the others had doubted the assertion. Soon he had asked questions which he said the men in the *aeroplano* wished to have answered. Where the men had come from, how many people lived there, what they did here, and if they had ever heard of a city at this place?

Marshall interjected a sharp query. The answer was no. The answers they gave to Juan, who wore the cap, were not translated by him. It was as if he merely wished the dangling dwarf in the suit like silver to overhear.

KEEN questioning had gone on. They had told about the white men for whom they worked, and of the white men's marvelous devices. Then Juan—he with the metal cap and strange expression—had said that anybody who wished to go ashore could do so, with a message that the men in the ship wished to speak to the white men, and would come ashore presently. They wished to be friends.

But after this Juan had taken off the cap and immediately his face had become empty and like that of an idiot. He had sat making faces to himself and uttering mewing sounds. He would not speak again, and the man in the silvery suit was hauled up out of sight. Then the rest of the *peons* had swum ashore.

The others, on arrival, were three parts panicky and one part bewildered. They confirmed this account in every detail. They stared imploringly at Marshall. He had their confidence. If he were frightened, they would be frightened. If he were brave they would be—well—relatively brave.

Marshall led the way toward the camp. On the way he abruptly asked what had happened to the cap after Juan took it off. It had been attached to a long cord, and the little man in shining armor carried it up with him.

Burroughs and the rest of the *peons* cut their way to the camp a little later. Marshall started to pace up and down, his forehead corrugated. Apsley told Burroughs the news while Marshall scowled and muttered to himself. Before he had finished, there was a cry from the *peon* who had been set on guard to watch the time-machine.

"*Mas de aeroplanos, señor!*"

Marshall's face went gray. Then the cries were specific.

"*Dos poquitos, señor! Dos aeroplanos poquitísimos!*"

Two little ones. Two very little ones.

An object darted across the sky. It was not a duplicate of the great machine on stilts. Something whirred above it. It came to a dead stop in midair directly above the encampment. It seemed to survey the camp. The cockpit was completely enclosed. The whole machine was no more than ten or fifteen feet long. It suddenly moved away, so swiftly that the eye could not quite follow it.

"Helicopters or something like that," Marshall said harshly. "That settles it. We haven't the ghost of a chance to get away."

"I don't see why not," Burroughs said irritably. "Jungle will hide anything."

Apsley viewed the subject with his usual detachment.

"I see it, I think," he said. "Because they stopped at this place—or time?" When Marshall nodded, he went on precisely. "I have been thinking. That Indian-woman thing proves that they know more about the fourth dimension than we do. It hinted at

their ability to make a time-machine. The plaques hinted at a particular ability to perceive emotions. The way that time-machine has been—well—casting back and forth since we've been here has been remarkably like the questing casts of a bird-dog who smells something, just before he points."

He looked at Marshall, and Marshall nodded again.

"That is a time-machine," Apsley said. "If it was hunting for a particular moment in which to stop, it is odd that it stopped at just the time we're here in this valley, which probably hasn't had men in it before for thousands of years. Unless—unless because we were here." He licked his lips and went on. "After all, the way it appeared and disappeared does seem like it was casting back and forth through time to find a particular moment. So it must have—stopped on our account. And if it could scent us out from the fourth dimension, it's rather likely its helicopters could scent us from a few hundred feet overhead if we tried to duck through the jungle."

"Of course," Marshall said curtly. "Do you realize what happened to Juan?"

Burroughs blinked. Apsley gagged.

"He wore a cap and asked questions," Marshall said savagely. "He asked questions he already knew the answers to! Then he took off the cap—it was on a cord which would be an electric cable—and promptly became an idiot. You see? They could use his brain as a translating device, if he wasn't in it. But they couldn't read it. They wouldn't have had to ask questions if they could. All they could do was make him an idiot and use him as part of a device for communication with us. You see what that implies?"

Apsley's smile was sickish.

"Those plaques and the Indian-woman thing didn't represent idiots," Marshall went on. "They represented human beings in the most overwhelming and painful of emotional states. That's their idea of emotional satisfaction. My stars! Spanish art goes in for pictures of bull-fighting. They'd go in for pictures of people gripped by horror and despair and frenzy because—to sense such things is their idea of pleasure!"

Marshall paced up and down again. He stopped.

"I think we can guess the rest," he said coldly. "They enjoy human emotion, because

they like to portray it, the more poignant the better. And I suspect that they will want to collect human beings as sources of pleasure."

"What's that?" Burroughs demanded sharply.

"The Romans," Marshall said sardonically, "ravaged all the known world for wild beasts to die in their arenas, because they liked to watch it. This is in addition to the slaves and criminals they killed. Think back to the time when this city was standing. The human population of the world was thin then, everywhere. Maybe these creatures thinned it! So if there weren't enough humans to torture in their world and period, why shouldn't they hunt through time for more victims?"

Apsley moved quickly to the edge of the camp. He was sick. Then another shout came from where men watched the lake.

"Señores! Señores!"

The floating thing was moving through the water. It came matter-of-factly toward the point of the shore nearest to the camp.

CHAPTER V

Booby Trap

WHEN it reached the shore it did not stop. Without a pause it came on up through the shallows and onto dry land. It was, in effect, an amphibious tractor with a flat, wide deck on which to carry a load. It had a small cabin forward which seemed to be transparent plastic.

There were two small figures inside, clad in metal suits which gleamed with an ever-so-faint yellowish tint as they stirred. Small, searchlight-like objects on top of the cabin moved restlessly, wavering back and forth from one group of humans to another.

The *peons* who had not swum ashore rode on the deck. When it stopped, one of them spoke tonelessly and the others leaped off, helping a groaning comrade to the ground. He was the one who had been burned on arm and shoulder.

One human figure remained seated on the deck. It was—it had been—Juan, whom Marshall had heard cracking jokes as he played some game while on guard the first night of the encampment in this valley. Now he wore a metal cap on his head, from which

a wire dangled, leading to the cabin. His expression was of an icy tranquillity. It was unearthly.

"*Señores*," he said in a curiously emotionless tone, "*los gentiles hombres de la maquina desean de preguntarles algunas cosas.*"

It was unhuman, that speech. It was a message from creatures of the thing above the lake, speaking through Juan's brain and lips. His brain translated thoughts into words as he knew, and would translate words back into the thoughts the creatures of the time-machine could understand. The transfer was possible only because Juan' own intelligence was not present to interfere. His brain had become merely a living mechanism.

Marshall growled.

"Very well," he said, in Spanish because Juan's brain could handle nothing else. "I realize I speak direct to you from the time-machine. What do you wish to know?"

A pause. Juan's face remained emotionless. Then, still without intonation, he asked questions. How far to the place from which the white men had come? How many people there? They had metal. How many metals did they know?

"Ninety-four elements, of which some are metals," Marshall answered. The query was to learn the degree of civilization of the white men, who obviously had advanced beyond the Indians, the only men the creatures of the time-machine had known before.

Another pause. The toneless voice again. Why had they come here? What were the legends about the city?

"The city is unknown to any men but us!" Marshall snapped.

The unhumanly inflected voice went on, using Juan's lips and Juan's vocabulary to ask questions he would never imaginably have thought of. How many people in other nations? In all the world? It took time for the world-population estimate of two billion human beings to reach a phrasing Juan's brain could translate. Other questions.

One of Marshall's answers implied the use of power. So men had power, now! What was its fuel?

"The same as yours," Marshall growled.

"What metal is broken up?" Juan's voice said, and Marshall fairly jumped.

For a metal to be broken up as a fuel meant atomic power. Marshall lied, deliberately using Juan's limited vocabulary to confuse the issue.

The voice asked coldly whether men had

found it possible to stabilize power so that it did not require constant attention. Marshall said no. Then came questions about weapons; Marshall deliberately multiplied the efficiency and range of human armaments. He suddenly barked a question of his own.

"Where do you come from?"

The reply was tonelessly contemptuous. "An answer would have no meaning to you. From another star."

"And you must wear special suits and helmets or die," Marshall rasped out. "Why do you stay when even our air is not fit for your breathing?"

The question was ignored. There was merely a perceptible delay. Then specific inquiries on power. How did men broadcast their power. With Juan's vocabulary, that came out in Spanish:

"How is power spread through the air?"

Marshall sweated, and said he was a specialist in another field. The questions changed again. Shrewd questions, penetrating questions, utterly without any quality of human feeling or emotion of any sort. A calculating, deliberate, merciless brain formed them, so contemptuous of humanity that it made no attempt to forestall speculation of the purpose behind such quest of knowledge. At the end. Marshall threw in another query.

"Why do you seek men?" he asked.

THE toneless voice answered with the same contemptuous baldness of phrasing.

"Pleasure. You would not understand."

"I think I would," Marshall said grimly.

"Never," said the voice, icily. "Our race is old as your sun. Emotion is bred out of it for intelligence, but emotion is pleasure. Your race provides us with pleasure. You would not understand that."

"I rather think I do," Marshall said savagely. "But you feel only one emotion. You would like to know why your city, which was great and thriving in the time you came from, is now a jungle. You have the emotion of curiosity, and perhaps of fear!"

There was no answer. Instead, uninflected words continued.

"We shall take back your possessions for study. You will follow to your camp. You will load your belongings on this vehicle. We shall not take any of you with us this time. It would be inconvenient and useless. You are only men."

The thing that had come ashore moved

forward. The small things atop it stirred. The jungle before it flared into flame. The tractor rolled deliberately into a very inferno of its own creation. Heat-rays literally burned a path through dense forest.

The men were left behind. Apsley watched it with scientific detachment.

"I am puzzled," Apsley said. "Before they came, I was scared. Now I'm not scared any more. What do you make of all this, Marshall?"

Marshall led the way through the hacked-through path that would lead to the camp without going through the roasting heat of the way the tractor had blasted.

"They use atomic power," he said. "It's dangerous, even to them. The generators have to be watched all the time. They broadcast their power—probably on that account. And they're taking all our stuff home to study, to find out how much we know. By the way, you notice they're wearing garments like diving-suits. Our air doesn't suit them. By the color of theirs, I suspect it's mostly chlorine. That would explain why they needed to develop so perfect a stainless steel. With any moisture at all, ordinary iron wouldn't last an hour, and it's the most plentiful strong metal anywhere. I wonder how they held the atmosphere in place over their city? Force-fields?"

He led the way. The *peons* were cowed. They followed the white men simply because the white men seemed to know what to do. Because the white men had talked—in Spanish—with Juan who spoke for the things in the object over the lake. Because the white men did not seem to be scared as the *peons* were.

"But that doesn't change the fact that things look bad," Apsley said.

"It changes everything," Marshall said sternly. "Look! We've got to load up their tractor or be burned down. It won't hold all our stuff. We'll keep out grub. Understand?"

They came in sight of the camp. The tractor waited. Behind it a smoking lane of acrid smoke led back to the lake shore.

"Confident devils!" Burroughs was indignant. "They didn't even think we might run away!"

"Useless," Marshall answered. "You chaps keep them busy watching you while I pack up for them."

Apsley was better at it than Burroughs. Burroughs was furious. Apsley created a diversion by arranging that only one of each

article was to be loaded, to save space. One wheelbarrow, one shovel, one tent, one induction-balance.

Presently Marshall staggered up with a huge parcel. He put it in place and tied it fast. He arranged the lashings which completed the job. He stood back, brushing his hands grimly.

Juan, the *peon* with the metal cap and the strange expression on his face, spoke again tonelessly.

"*Bueno pues*," Juan said. "We shall take this back. And you have curiosity, too. You may know about the city. We will return with our report. Our race will move forward in time, to this age which has two billion humans for our pleasure. We will build a new city, perhaps here, perhaps elsewhere, removing all we wish from the old. And that the human race may not be warned of our existence between the times of our ruling of the earth, we will destroy the early city after the new one is built."

Then Juan—who was part of the communication-apparatus of the creatures in the machine out of time—Juan stepped down to the ground, and took the metal cap off his head, and instantly his features became utterly vacuous. He made grimaces to himself, and little bubbling sounds.

A BRUPTLY the tractor stirred. It moved, with its bulky load of possessions from the expedition. The stuff had been tied fast. It moved off toward the still-smoking lane through the jungle. One of the searchlike things turned until it was pointed at Juan. He exploded in incandescent steam.

Twenty minutes later, Marshall and Apsley and Burroughs stood at the edge of the jungle and watched the metal cylinder above the lake.

"They can tell our emotions," Marshall growled, "I knew I was plenty sore, so I had you two stay around the tractor while I packed up."

The tractor, floating soggily, came out of the water attached to cables. It was hauled up to the bright cylinder on stilts. The two helicopters came back, hovered briefly, and were swallowed up.

The tractor went up and up, swaying, and Marshall's hands clenched tightly. A great side door opened, and the tractor was swung within. The door closed.

Suddenly there was a throbbing pulsation in the air and the metal thing grew cloudy,

and the spindly legs began to fold up to its bulk even as they grew misty and unsubstantial. Then the air above the lake was empty.

Marshall smiled, very grimly. Apsley drew a long breath.

"I've got a hunch," he said quietly. "I was scared before that thing got here. Then, suddenly, while we were talking to it down by the shore, I wasn't scared any more. I'm not scared now. What it is, Marshall?"

"Blast 'em!" Burroughs sputtered. "They got some of my notes! And the peons are already loading the mules. They're leaving.

We can't make them stay any longer, Marshall."

"That's all right," Marshall said. He added sourly. "Mighty superior creatures, weren't they? Didn't bother to take any of us back because we were only men. Didn't mind telling us what their plans would be because we're too puny to interfere. They take everything they want out of the city and destroy it so the human race won't know anything about them between the two periods when they rule the world. The devil with them!"

He turned and moved back toward the encampment.

[Turn page]

DEAD CITY

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"We're leaving, just the same, and staying away," he said. "We want things to work out as they did. If we hung around now, while they made those casts through time for humans, we might mess up the past. But if we stay away they'll never come back."

Apsley followed close behind.

"I've got a hunch, that it's all right," he said. "What causes it, Marshall?"

Marshall grinned mirthlessly.

"They didn't take everything out of the city before they destroyed it, did they?" he answered. "And the way to destroy a city is with a lot of little explosions, not one big one. They didn't take out their works of art, and we saw the rust that was their machines. And there's this lake that says the city was destroyed by an explosion equivalent to fifty thousand tons of TNT going off at one time! That would smash whatever kept their atmosphere so they could breathe, and every one of the race that the explosion didn't kill would die of breathing the air we humans thrive on. They're dead now, every one of them! They've been dead for twenty thousand years!"

His hands closed and unclosed.

"Rotten beasts," he added. "Using humans for pleasure! Making men suffer because they enjoyed it! Cruel beasts! Serves 'em right!"

"What did you do?" Apsley demanded.

"They were so certain and confident after I'd told them about our guns," Marshall said wrathfully. "When I bluffed we had atomic power too, they asked if it had to be watched. And they broadcasted their power. That was it. Atomic power must be tricky. Probably all right with a man on watch, but needing to be watched. So I fixed up something they couldn't watch against! We're only men. They weren't afraid of us. So I took all the explosive we had and made a booby-trap. While it was left on the tractor the way I piled it, it would be all right. But the last thing I did was to pull out a string that armed it. When they started to unload that tractor, eighty pounds of demolition explosives was fixed to go off!"

TROWNING, Apsley stared for a moment at Marshall.

"Why are you so sure?" he asked.

"There was an atomic-power unit in the time-machine," Marshall said. "Had to be! They couldn't broadcast power through time. So the machine will go back to their city,

and they'll start unloading what they've taken back, and the booby-trap will blow up. In a thing the size of that machine it will raise the devil. The atomic-power unit in the machine will blow. That will be a darn sight bigger explosion. And that will set off the atomic-power unit which runs their whole city and keeps their atmosphere in and does everything else. That'll be an explosion equal to fifty or sixty or a hundred thousand tons of TNT, and it will blow their city to blazes!"

"Maybe—but—it might not happen . . ." Apsley said doubtfully.

"And the answer to that is that it did explode!" Marshall waved his hand back toward the ruins. "The city's gone, isn't it? Well, I destroyed that city—twenty thousand years ago!"

They reached the camp. The peons were working in a queer, nerve-racked haste, loading the mules with what was left. If Marshall had tried to stop them, they would have run away. Instead, he organized them. In a half-hour the expedition swung off on the trail that would lead back toward the coast. And that night, camped miles away in a narrow clearing in the jungle, Burroughs uttered a complaint.

"Hang it!" he said querulously, "I know my primitive man, but I still don't understand what happened. You're sure those creatures will never come back, Marshall?"

Marshall nodded.

"But we never even got a glimpse of them," Burroughs said. "We don't know what they were really like."

"Personally," said Apsley, "I don't even want to know."

"Blast the luck!" Burroughs snapped. "A culture like that—we should at least have tried to work out the real cause that doomed it. There was a marvelous civilization, and it vanished utterly. What happened to all its technics, its knowledge, its sciences?"

"Marshall," Apsley said drily.

"Let's say that we all did it," Marshall said. "But nobody'll ever believe us. We happened to it!"

But in that he was a bit over-generous. It was really Marshall's show from beginning to end. His, and the knife's. Only it's four knives now. He has four fine stainless steel knives, and he's considered a crackpot because he insists they're twenty thousand years old. And Burroughs and Apsley agree with him.



"Telsor!" the girl called—but the young man was too preoccupied to notice her

TWILIGHT PLANET

By **POLTON CROSS**

A young scientist shatters the atom and releases energy that destroys his planet—but reveals the secret of life!

THE great corridors of the master-city laboratories were deserted as Liana Fonray fled softly down them. She had slid past the none too watchful attendant in the entrance hall. She hurried with the easy grace of youth, a lightly-clad symphony in curves, her long yellow hair swept away from her lovely face by the breeze from the great ventilator shafts.

She had no right to be in here at all. Not

because she was a woman, but because she was not a scientist. The fact that she was the daughter of the Chief Physicist made no difference, for it did not make her one as well. If she were found, the law would not be lenient.

At a massive bronze-colored door she hesitated and glanced about her—still nobody in sight. The calm of the night was on the place. The staff had gone home except

for one man—the one she sought with such recklessness.

For a moment she hesitated at the bronze door, then tried her gentle strength against it as she moved the catch. She was glad that it opened easily. It would not be necessary to disturb the room's inmate. Gracefully as a cat, she glided through the opening and closed the door behind her.

She stopped, her blue eyes wide in amazement at the immensity before her. She had never seen inside the main experimental hall of the physical laboratories before. Its mighty engines of science were somehow terrifying. The criss-crossing aisles and raised balconies made the place a gigantic, metallic spider's web.

For a moment the girl was confused. Then, at a distance, she caught sight of a solitary figure bending intently over a crackling electrical apparatus. Now and again great tubes filled with a myriad of colors—or, instead, a blaze of naked electrical light flared in blinding brilliance.

"Telsor!" the girl called. But the young man in the tunic and shorts was too preoccupied to notice her—or else he did not hear.

Liana went forward silently, keeping close to the machines so as not to make her appearance too sudden and disturb him. She watched the dark head bending over the equipment, the bronzed and muscular forearms working busily. Then a bewildering brilliance blazed forth with such intensity she clapped her hands to her eyes and screamed.

Her cry was sufficient to bring the young man to her side. As his arm went about her shoulders she lowered her hands, and for a while the great space swam in a blazing sea of red and green. Then gradually her eyes adjusted themselves and she saw Telsor Rolf's serious young face, his dark eyes concerned. Blue goggles were pushed up on his wide forehead.

"Liana, what are you doing here?" he demanded, with unmeaning roughness. "Do you realize you might have been blinded? Why did you come? You know it isn't allowed!"

"I just had to come," she answered simply. "A woman's place is beside the man she is going to marry, and I couldn't have you working here night after night, when working hours are over, without knowing what you are doing. Father has hinted at some

great experiment. What is it?"

"I don't think you'd understand it," he answered, doubting. Then as he saw the look of disappointment on her face, he added with a smile, "I am trying to isolate an electron so that it can be viewed in a subatomic microscope."

"Oh! And would that be a—a useful thing to accomplish?"

"It would solve many problems of science, Liana. You see, by its very nature, the electron, as we understand it at present, cannot be viewed because the impact of light waves turned upon it are sufficient to deflect it. We know it is there, but science likes proof, something more than the mere probability that an electron exists in a given space."

FROM her expression the girl betrayed her lack of knowledge. But because Telsor had told it to her, and because Telsor was acknowledged to be a brilliant physicist despite his youth, she tried to evince interest. Going to the apparatus, she studied it.

"I'm trying first to isolate a carbon atom," Telsor added, joining her. "The isolation of the electron itself will follow that. I've chosen carbon because it has certain exceptional qualities."

"Such as?" she asked curiously.

"Well, it is more than probable that life only exists at all because of the carbon atom. Life without carbon isn't even possible. Its atom consists of six electrons revolving around the nucleus.

"It differs from its nearest neighbors in the Periodic Table—boron and nitrogen—in that it has one electron more than the former and one fewer than the latter. That is why I am trying to isolate the solitary electron without, I hope, causing a total breakdown of the carbon atom itself."

The girl gave a little sigh and smiled faintly. Then, womanlike, she forgot all about the intricacies of science and strolled to the window. Even young Telsor Rolf was not so absorbed in his experiment that he could not appreciate how attractive she looked, standing there gazing out over the city. He joined her, put an arm about her shoulders.

The city was lighted brilliantly and the day-lamps had been extinguished. Normal daylight from a sun was unknown. The sun was a remote tennis ball blazing in a sky of stars and swirling planets.

The two young people did not look out on the universe from Earth, but from a world which had as its nearest neighbours, a small planet with two active moons, and a giant cloud-girt world which poured its heat and ultra-violet radiations down upon them and so made up for everything the distant sun lacked—except light.

And this the scientists had overcome by devising energy lamps. For twelve hours they glowed in simulated daylight. Then, for another twelve, they were extinguished and recharged.

Telsor Rolf and Liana lived on a twilight planet, the only world they had ever known. Science, achievement, peace—all these things were present. But there still remained much to be discovered, how much they could not even guess unless the uncommon genius of Telsor Rolf could make an electron stand still.

"Funny," the young man murmured presently, his eyes on the starlit heavens, "to think that we are alone in the universe. We of this planet, I mean."

"Are we—alone?" The girl took the prodigious statement with amazing lightness.

"Alone on our little grain of sand," Telsor whispered. "We fight and struggle and die in the core of vast and meaningless distances, always aware that there are in those heavens as many worlds and suns as there are grains of sand on all the seashores of the world.

"And life alone came here—because of carbon, because of the blind play of inexplicable forces, because of the chemical reaction set up by naked cosmic rays pouring in from space. Sometimes—sometimes it's terrifying."

"Yes!" The girl's voice became awed and her blue eyes peered up into the incomprehensible mists of the Milky Way. "Yes, it is terrifying! And there is no life anywhere?"

"Not as far as our instruments can detect."

"Not even on that remote green star there, next to that reddish one?"

"Behind the reddish one," Telsor corrected, smiling. "It is much further away, third planet from the sun. No, there is no life even there. We are the fifth planet in order from the sun, and behind us stretch five more planets, four giants and one heavy pygmy."

"Yet we possess life. Probably, if it became necessary, we could exist equally well

on the third or fourth planets from the sun. Our eyes could stand the glare of the much nearer sun. Evolution, artificial light and the always present glow from the giant world nearest us have rendered that possible."

The girl turned from the window, reflecting.

"It is a wonderful thing—life," she mused.

"When I look at you, I am conscious of carbon atoms in their most enchanting link-up." Telsor laughed. Then he administered an almost boyish kiss and patted her rounded arm. "But you'll have to go, Liana. I must carry on my experiment. I dare not leave it now. In these tubes and apparatus elemental forces are at work and if I stop them heaven knows what may happen."

"But—but surely I can stay and watch?" she pleaded.

HE HESITATED. "I'm afraid for you to. There might be an explosion. In trying to isolate an electron of carbon I am using the atomic force of hydrogen for my energy. It's deadly unless rightly handled. A mistake might destroy this entire planet!"

"Then you would die, and I'd die with you," the girl murmured. "It is no more dangerous for you than for me. I'm staying! We can go home together later."

"Well—all right," Telsor agreed. Turning aside, he pulled up a heavy lead shield with a deep purple glass sunk in its center. "Stand behind this," he ordered. "I'm taking no chances with so precious a spectator."

Liana obeyed eagerly and thereafter stood with her eyes glued to the glass and her slim body tensed in excitement as Telsor handled switches and buttons on his apparatus with the skill of a master.

She had not the remotest conception of his aims, even though she was a witness to his movements. Filigrees and spiders' webs of pure electrical energy writhed at times between polished balls; bolts of furious power slammed into transformer chambers.

Earthing rods glowed under sudden huge electrical loads—and, now and again, that withering intensity of pure energy light gushed forth, turning the ceiling floodlamps to dirty yellow by comparison with its unholy glare.

Then, unexpectedly, came something different! There was a riot of electrical discharges which clearly had no place in the experiment. Telsor began to work like a man possessed, obviously aware of some flaw in

his experiment.

But he was not quick enough. There was an abrupt electric disturbance of immense power which momentarily turned the apparatus pale green—then it went dead and smoky black, charred out of all shape. The glass in the tubes melted from inconceivable heat, the anode and cathode globes were useless as circular cinders on top of their corroded poles.

Telsor staggered backwards, wiping perspiration from his face. Liana crept from behind the shield and caught at his trembling arm.

"What—what happened?" she asked, wide-eyed.

"Too much power!" His voice was shaken. "I should have stepped down a bit—but I wanted maximum. I hammered the hydrogen atoms too much. They changed into helium. The sudden overload of energy due to the change in atomic makeup caused that sudden seize-up." He rubbed his naked forearms vigorously. "I got an unpleasantly large blast of cosmic rays from it, too!"

They were silent for a moment, rather terrified by the blind malignancy of natural forces. Then in a rather wondering voice the girl asked a question.

"What's that there? A diamond?"

She bent down to pick up a glittering object from the shattered equipment, but Telsor dived and snatched her hand back. His lean, tense face was beside hers, peering down.

"It's—energy!" he whispered incredulously. "Atomic energy! Not the kind the scientists use for light and power but the real thing. One atom breaks down and releases its energy, and immense sub-atomic disturbance produced thereby sets up ripples in the next nearest group of atoms. Then that too starts to break down. It's—progressive!"

They both straightened up slowly, searching each other's eyes.

"This is the thing scientists have dreaded for ages," Telsor said mechanically, his face suddenly old. "So far, chance has been kind. We've skirted the edge of unthinkable forces and tamed them, but a slip was always possible—and now I've made it!"

"But can't you extinguish it?" the girl asked, surprised. "It—it looks rather pretty, I think."

For a moment her ignorance of the tragic portent enraged Telsor, but with an effort he held himself in check.

"How can one extinguish the collapse of matter itself?" he demanded. "It'll grow—and grow—my God!" Stunned with the shock of foreseeing what might happen, he raced for the visiphone and switched to a number. In a moment the stern face of Liana's father merged onto the teleplate.

"Hallo, Telsor!" he greeted, rather surprised. "Anything wrong?"

"I—I think so, sir," the young scientist stammered. "I want you to come to the main laboratory right away. I'm scared!"

He switched off and looked blankly at the girl.

"What do I do," she asked helplessly. "I can't let father find me here."

"He'll have more things to worry about than your presence here, believe me," Telsor interrupted. He began to pace up and down anxiously as he waited for the expert to arrive. All the time he moved, he was conscious of vicious little prickings in his skin, both on the exposed and unexposed parts. It was hardly attributable to electrical static. It was too sharp—like a thousand needles plunging deep.

THEN at last there were quick footsteps in the corridor outside and Elvan Fon-ray, the girl's father, came hurrying in. He was a tall, spare man with muscular legs and sinewy hands. High-cheekbones and taut lips revealed both thinker and man of action.

He glanced at his daughter, hesitated. Then whatever he was going to say evaporated as he caught sight of the intense little spot of light amidst the wrecked equipment. He frowned at it. Snatching up a blue shield for his eyes, he went down on his knees and peered at the phenomenon closely. Real alarm was on his face when he stood up again.

"In the name of science, boy, what have you done?" he demanded, clutching Telsor's shoulder. "This is disintegrative atomic force! Matter cancer! It can bring the whole world down around our ears!"

Tremblingly, Telsor told of his experiment and the lean-jawed physicist listened in concentrated attention.

"So you changed hydrogen into helium, did you? Hmm! That means that every four hydrogen atoms crushed together to form a helium atom would discharge a radiation of o-point-o-three, a surplus mass from the helium atom. Pure cosmic rays must have

been generated for a brief instant, too, existing in the same form as in the free cosmos. Didn't you feel them?"

"I still do," Telsor muttered uneasily. "But I'm not unduly worried about myself. What do we do with—that?"

"Obviously the violent interchange of energy started it," Fonray said, frowning perplexedly as he stared at it. "And I don't know how to stop it—but it has got to be stopped, if we work night and day until we accomplish it."

He broke off and swung to the attentive girl.

"What are you doing here, Liana?" he asked brusquely.

"I only came to see Telsor."

"Then you had no right! Go home immediately, and don't ever let me find you here again. Telsor will come and see you when he is free to do so."

Liana did not reply, but there was no resentment in her attitude. She knew that she had transgressed, and she knew too, that her father was unmeaningly harsh in his anxiety. She gave Telsor a smile, then turned and went silently towards the door.

"This is serious!" Fonray declared, still frowning.

"It was a sheer accident, sir, and—"

"Yes, yes, of course it was an accident. All these damnable flukes of Nature are accidents—that is why we never have time to prepare a remedy. Bring me that neutralizer."

Telsor obeyed, and from then on he was only too glad to let his superior take charge of the situation. But his efforts with the neutralizer, a device for short-circuiting escaping energy into freer paths, were of no avail. The glowing spot became a larger glowing spot, consuming metal and stone as it expanded.

In half an hour of frantic effort, trying every scientific trick he knew, the physicist was no nearer a solution. The spot became a hole, radiating a light so intense that the two could no longer study it without shields before their eyes.

Fonray did not admit that he was beaten, even though inwardly he felt almost sure that he was.

"I'll have to consult the other scientists," he said finally, wiping his greasy face. "This is more than one man's brain can handle. You'd better go home. You look all in."

"I am," Telsor confessed. "I don't think

that burst of cosmic rays did me any good since I had no protection suit on."

"In the pure, undiluted state they couldn't have. Off with you and get some rest!"

Telsor Rolf did not quite remember how he got home. He was in a peculiar state in which he was neither ill nor well. It was as if he was perfectly normal part of the time, then some inner disturbance would knock him off balance and he would become slightly delirious.

Certainly he had little consciousness of crossing the gulf of lighted city in an elevated monocar, even less of entering his apartment on the city's outskirts.

The thought of supper nauseated him. Instead he poured himself a glass of essence, then sat thinking for a while, as the gentle exhilarating fluid surged into his bloodstream.

He began to feel better, less conscious of the accidental wrong he had done. That glowing hole devouring the heart of a fabulously costly physcial laboratory no longer troubled him quite so much.

BUT it was only a brief reprieve from harrassment, caused by the essence. In half an hour, as he prepared for bed, the effect had worn off and he was, if anything, more worried than ever.

It was as he stripped off his clothes and prepared to don his pajamas that he stopped, staring at his legs and arms. They were covered with myriad little pimples, each with a dull red top, like tiny boils about to come to a head.

The sight of them stirred a deep inner feeling of uncleanness; the pain of them was manifested in those myriad needle pricks still grinding away so persistently at his body that he had become numbed to them.

When he looked in the full length mirror, he saw that his face was in a similar condition. For several minutes he stood, wondering what he ought to do—then more from desperation than aught else he flung himself on the bed and drew the coverlet over him.

He closed his eyes—then opened them again abruptly. A sensation of the vilest headlong falling was upon him the moment he lowered his lids. It made him clutch the bed for support.

Again he tried, and again, forcing himself to have the courage to see where the fall would end. But it did not really end any-

where. It was as if he were falling endlessly through space itself, while past him, so prodigious was his speed, stars and suns streaked in ghostly, blazing splendor.

At last he groaned and sat up. Everything was normal the moment he opened his eyes. He switched on the light and stared blankly at the wall for a moment, rubbing his aching face. It was something in the quality of his hand as he rubbed that made him forget everything else. It was not the strong, yet withal spotted hand to which he was accustomed, but—

It was clawlike! Startled, he lowered it and stared.

The very bones of the hand itself had somehow retracted and the nails had shrunk to microscopic size. Even as he watched they vanished altogether under swift contraction of the skin. He did not actually feel the incredible metamorphosis. It was as if he were one mass of indescribable aches and pains, so that one more made little difference.

Dazed, he looked at his other hand, and found it had behaved the same way.

The shock was terrific. He scrambled from the bed and went again to the mirror, but so far nothing was wrong with the rest of his body—except for the spots, and these now were showing signs of disappearing. His face had indeed become normal—as far as the spots went—but either it was his imagination or else his beard line was vanishing and giving his cheeks an almost girlish softness. It looked as though he had never had hair on his face at all!

Bemused, he stumbled back to the bed and sat on the edge of it, thinking, flogging his brain. That sense of earlier confusion was less noticeable now; it was more as if something were trying to gain access to his consciousness.

"Carbon," he whispered, and he did not know why he said the word. "Carbon! Carbon!"

Like a flash from a sparkgap, his hazy conjectures leapt into clear realization. He jumped up and began to talk to the empty room.

"Carbon! I have carbon atoms. Everything has carbon atoms! Cosmic rays, in the beginning, caused life. Because of them constant mutations are occurring, especially in man. Life only exists in the universe at all because carbon has the power to combine with other elements in endless variety.

"I was exposed to pure cosmic rays for a

brief space. They affected the carbon atoms in my makeup. I am *evolving!* And evolving fast! Mutation upon mutation, even as the minutes pass by."

He paused, his face deathly white. He had spoken truth, and he knew it. He could feel the warmth of accelerated metabolism flowing through him. He had no thermometer handy, but he guessed his temperature to be well above normal already.

His readiness to believe in his own discovery started a new train of thought. First and foremost he was a scientist, and even if he himself were the victim of science's deadly power he wanted to know the why and wherefore.

ALITTLE calmer, he sat down again and studied his hands, his mind rippling under new conceptions.

"I am evolving—that is established," he muttered. "In that case my brain must keep pace with it. The body cannot evolve without the brain doing likewise.

"If cosmic rays reacting on carbon atoms produced the fluke of life on this world, what produced intelligence? To knit together the chemical aggregates of life did not give them the power to think! Whence came that?"

But he was asking himself an impossible question. Though he could sense the gradual expansion of his conceptions as his brain underwent mutational changes, he was still not ready to solve this greatest of all scientific problems.

Far more settled in his emotions now that he knew he was tackling an incredible scientific fortuity he turned and went back to bed. That sense of deadly falling was absent now and he realized it had probably been caused by the changing action of the fluid of balance above his ears. But if the falling was absent, weird mental visions were not.

He could feel himself alive with conceptions—advanced ideas of what he had already learned, for even brain mutations could not tell him what he did not know. It was simply that his known knowledge was able to expand vastly, where formerly it had been limited.

He remembered the soft buzzer of the synchroclock announcing four in the morning—then he fell asleep.

The city day-lights were on as usual when he awoke, but with their radiance was mixed a pallid, steady glow that had no right to be there. For several minutes he lay trying to

assimilate things—then he remembered.

He jerked up his head, then let it fall back again with a gasp of anguish at a wrenching pain in his neck. It was as though his head had become too heavy for him to raise it.

It was because his head had become too heavy! His thin, wizened hands went over its huge, bulging pate. His hair had gone. He could feel bony eyebrow ridges, the distension of veins on the taut skin of his skull. His vision, however, was undisturbed, in fact it was unnaturally clear.

His legs had shrunk even as his arms, his chest and hips too. Breathing was difficult. Gently he eased his hands under the back of his head and so, after some effort, got himself into a sitting position, supporting his egregious dome in his cupped hands, elbows on his knees.

The mirror caught his reflection as he turned towards it. For some reason he was not shocked. He had expected it. Science had said evolution must produce something like this—a wild travesty of a man, a baroque, with a brain-case so big his neck could not support it—a body so delicate it was fed by force of will alone.

He was still Telsor Rolf. He realised that. But gone were the thoughts of the previous night—of the desirability of marrying Liana Fonray, of youth together, of conquering the secrets of Nature. Such things no longer interested him. Still holding his head he got up and looked through the window. That light added to the day-globes was immediately explained.

FROM the center of the city was emanating an irresistible blinding glare—the blaze of pure devouring energy, where matter was being consumed with a speed proportionate to the area of the disturbance. The heart of the city must have been eaten away during the night, and no doubt there was a mine in the ground of corresponding depth. End of the planet? Well, perhaps.

Telsor turned clumsily and staggered towards a chair. Then, supporting his head against the edge of the metal table he began to unscrew the chair legs from the seat and used them as a rough cage. This he fixed on his shoulders and under his chin and the back of his head. Now he had a support he could learn to walk all over again.

He was just getting along nicely when his apartment door bell rang. He hesitated, then with considerable effort lurched across the

room and gazed out upon his visitor.

“Telsor, you’ve got to come—”

Liana stood on the threshold, her gush of words stopped. She fixed her eyes on the incredibly dwarfish figure with the mighty cranium—then her legs gave way and she sprawled on the carpet.

Telsor stood looking down at her, baffled. Then he shut the door and tried to lift her in his arms. She was far too heavy. All he could do was seize her under her armpits and drag her to the divan, against which he propped her head and shoulders.

After a few minutes she began to recover. Telsor stood watching her intently, saw again that look of incredible horror sweep over her face.

“I know,” he whispered, his voice ready and cracked. “I know what you are thinking, Liana. But I am Telsor Rolf, just the same. I have evolved. In fact I am still evolving. I don’t know where it is going to end.”

“Evolved?” she repeated huskily. “But how?”

“Those cosmic rays—last night. They mutated me several centuries ahead. The last men on this planet will look as I do now.”

Realization seemed to strike her. Her horror of the discovery was clearly outweighed by something else.

“There won’t be any last men on the planet!” She scrambled to her feet as she spoke. “The planet’s being eaten up! That atomic force is eating it away! We’re evacuating everybody from the area.”

“To where?” Telsor asked tonelessly. “Space travel is an art we have not yet mastered—and that is the only way out.”

The girl stared at him fixedly, dumb horror in her blue eyes.

“I know,” she said, in a dead voice. “It’s just cheating death until it catches up, I suppose. But dad sent me to tell you that there might be a way if you’ll come and help.”

“There is no way, Liana, take it from me, I have gained knowledge centuries ahead of the present, and no power of man’s devising can conquer devouring atomic force. But the space travel problem I can work out—and quickly.

“The best thing is for all of you to evacuate as planned. In the meantime I’ll work out a means of traveling space. Now go! Please!”

Liana turned towards the door, looked

back at him once more in horrified wonder—then she went.

Space travel—of course he could conquer it! The theories he had had as the normal Telsor Rolf were now expanded with his brain's mutations into absolute knowledge. He went to the table and pulled a sheet of foil from the drawer, held the sylo-pen in his unaccustomed claw.

Carbon? Intelligence? Carbon? Intelligence?

The two problems and the missing link between danced in his brain as he forced himself to think on the profoundest riddles of science. What gave intelligence to carbon atoms to make them thinking beings?

He nearly had it—then the answer slipped by him again and he began to wrestle with the complexity of space travel. But even as he made the first awkward notations with his clumsy hand he realized that the end of his evolution was not yet. Further anguishing changes swept through him and there came a weird foreshortening of vision. With it a swift alteration of his limbs.

HE WAS shrinking at an incredible speed—shrinking like a rubber man with the air escaping from him. The stylo became too ponderous for his minimizing hand. His head slipped inside the rough cage. The table seemed to swell and grow away from him.

He did not lose consciousness during his descent into remote smallness. Rather his brain seemed to be sharpened. How long it lasted he did not know, but he did realize that when the evolution was finished he was not seeing with his eyes or hearing with his ears.

Both states were mental, and what body he possessed was a long barlike creation floating gently in the breeze of the apartment. The apartment itself seemed nearly as big as a planet, and the open window was the sky.

Bacteria! He realized it suddenly. The evolution beyond evolution. Scientists had averred that life would finally pass into the form of indestructible bacteria, the toughest form of life in creation—able to resist the boiling of water and the frigid cold of space. Man must become bacteria—finally.

He had become that—intelligent beyond anything he had ever known, but was it finality? He suspected other things were to happen even yet before the mutations of atomic structure came to an end.

Dimly he was aware of the disaster of the happening. He knew how to conquer space, yet he had not the physical means of passing on his information.

As he drifted through the window, entirely invisible, and floated amidst the rocks of dust in the atmosphere, he saw below him the planet he was powerless to save. It was vast to his mental eyes—incredibly vast—seared in the center by a gaping, blinding hole of intense white.

From it he could see people milling in ever thickening crowds, spreading away from the scene of the disturbance like the tentacles of an octopus. Flight, to stave off the evil hour—flight, while they waited for him to solve the problem!

He would have felt sorrow, but emotion was dead.

It was some time before he realized his will power was such that he had no need to rely on the driftings of the wind to guide his course. So he hovered and watched and the awful flame of energy was powerless to blind him. The thunder of collapsing rock was unable to deafen him. He had gained a brief but magnificent immunity to the forces of Nature gone mad.

Perhaps it was hours—weeks—years. He could not be sure. His sense of time had gone. But he saw the whole panorama below him drag to its awful end. There came a time at last when the consuming fire had spread so far from the center that the people were round the edge of the dying planet in a black and jagged fringe.

He pictured them cowering before the glare, seared by the awful heat. He pictured Liana, her sightless eyes staring helplessly into the gulf, her lovely form lashed by the first awful flames of the devouring fire. She would be wondering why he had not kept his word.

Then came the incredible vision of a world collapsing, of a whole planet exploding into whirling fragments of blazing rock, shooting outwards as myriads of separately burning fragments, doomed to consume themselves and leave, perhaps, tiny burned-out husks in which atoms would form again. Meteorites, maybe—even a band of asteroids. For some of the trapped people, there had been the more merciful death of space cold.

The planets moved and swung majestically under the gravitational changes as their tortured brother died. Then it was all over—but not for Telsor Rolf.

AGAIN the mutational surge was passing through him. He realized it even as the swingings of gravity fields forced him through the black void against his will. And the void held energies and cosmic rays in their pure form.

They were ripping at him, battering apart his bacterial make-up. He was moving with terrific speed, down at last towards a green world, slowly swinging to a standstill as the changes subsided.

He went through cloud, down and down into a world of steam and dank warmth. Then came sudden agony through his body as though it were being split into a million fragments, as though he were in a million places at the same time.

He seemed to be in the dark now, moving majestically round a sun. There were six of him moving round the sun. There were six suns! Twice times six—a million of him revolving round a million suns—two million—three....

He had split into electrons, was going

round the nucleus.

There were six—carbon! And the truth came to him. Life had come to his world because just such an accident as this had happened there too. Why not, if Time were a circle?

A thinking being had been split into carbon atoms, and each atom had retained the power of thought!—With the processes of life, the thought-power—the life energy as some scientist had called it—would be handed down to the otherwise lifeless molecular build-up.

Carbon had the power of thought!

And life would come here—to this world man would call Earth. Man would wonder how life had arrived, even more so what made it think. They would count four planets and then gaze at a belt of asteroids and wonder how it came to be there.

As Telsor Rolf had done, they too would wonder.

But for Telsor Rolf wonder was no more. He knew.



HEADLINERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE

JOHN RUSSELL FEARN'S novel next issue is a fantasy that will delight every science fiction fan! When the hero, Grant Mayson, plucks a girl from the ether—a girl from another cosmic eon—it's the start of a trail of adventure that will enthral you! **THE MULTILLIONTH CHANCE** is a "must"!

* * * * *

MURRAY LEINSTER is at top form in his novelet next issue—**POCKET UNIVERSES**. This unusual story revolves around the curious machine known as the diamagnet—which CAN'T exist, and yet does. The development of this machine leads to curious occurrences that play hob with space in a way that will astound you!

* * * * *

KEITH HAMMOND, in **CALL HIM DEMON**—incidentally, it's illustrated by Virgil Finlay—presents a novelet that's quite different from anything you've ever read before. A child's insight, and a child's venture into the unknown, are the highlights of this strange tale—and it's told with an understanding of psychology which will arouse your admiration. It's a novelet that opens a whole new vista of science to your gaze!

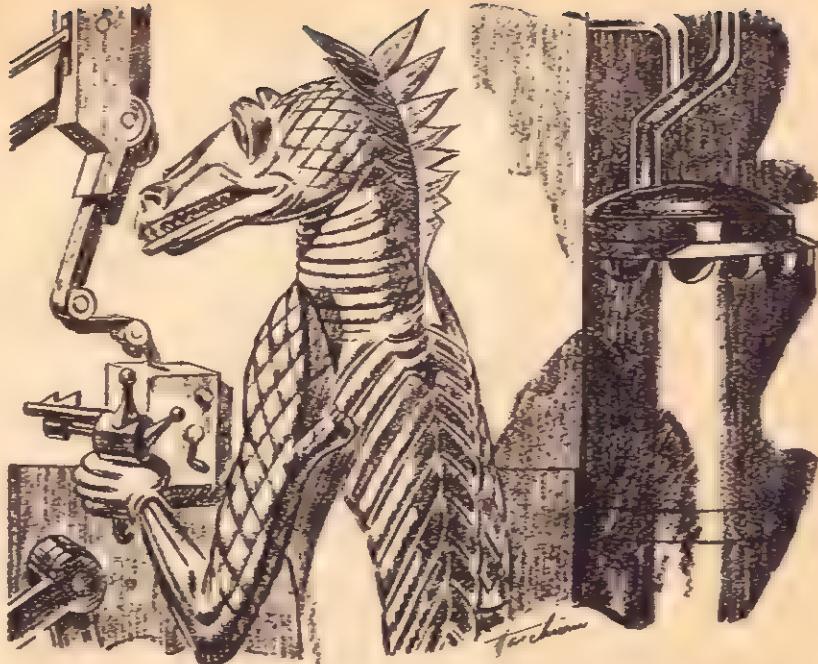
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BESIDES these headliners, next issue's all-star roster includes several short stories by your favorite authors, as well as another long, interesting gabfest in **THE READER SPEAKS**. Look forward to a splendid number!

*A Complete
Novelet*



*A Complete
Novelet*



As Starnik gave the signal which was soon to send the populace of the City into frenzied revolt, Nissa's eyes widened with excitement and she reached upward to fire a kub on the lever.

THE ICE WORLD

By ROSS ROCKLYNNE

When reptiles rule in a dying world, brave Starnik and his friend Caset become the leaders of a daring revolt as they fight against great odds to restore the heritage of mankind!

CHAPTER I

Ship from Afar

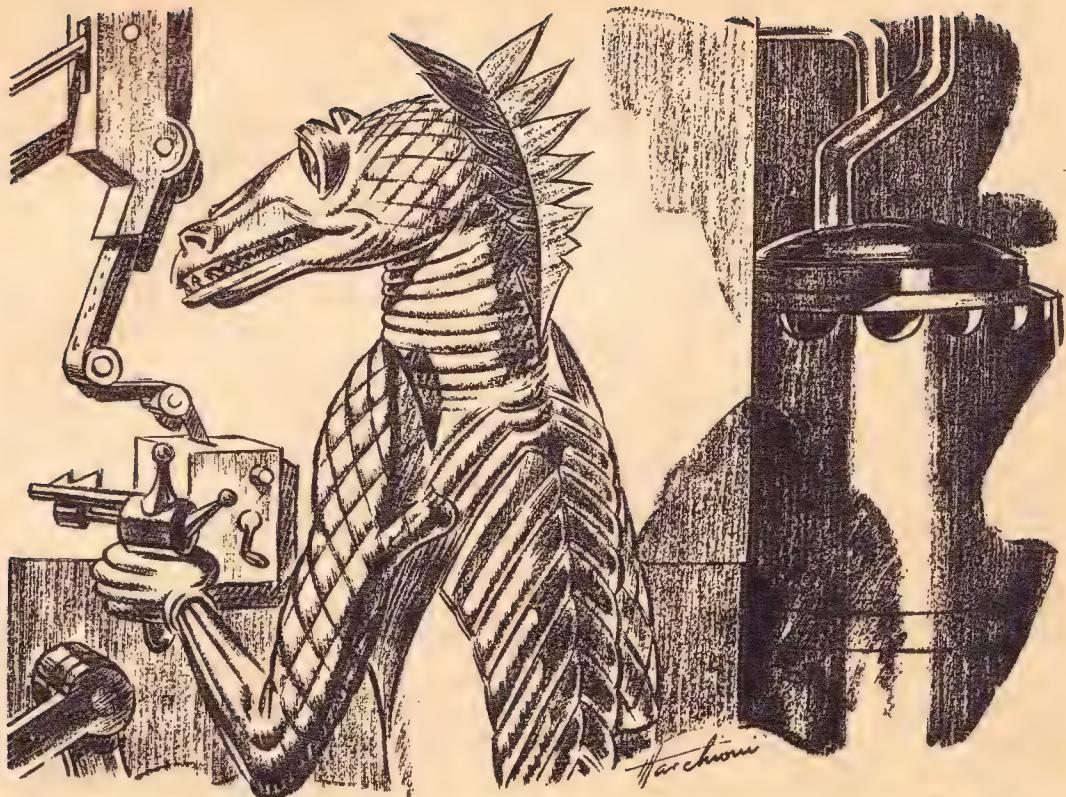
IN THE twilight of Earth's history, when the Sun was a red ball in the fading heavens, there was but one City that carried the torch of human hope. This was a magnificent, lonely city of a thousand souls.

Under that black sky, wherein even few of the burned-out stars were visible, went

the ice-tractor. It crawled slowly, as if it too were infected by the universe's creeping paralysis.

At its controls, long, tendril-like fingers grasping the levers, sat young Starnik, son of Arnik.

"Father," Starnik whispered. Suddenly he was appalled by the blinding waste of snow and the dirty white buttresses of the encircling glacier in the distance. "Is it true that ice once flowed in liquid form on the planet?"



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"Yes, but millions of years ago, my son. Now ice flows only in the City, as man wills it."

"And when the glaciers reach the City?"

The older man spoke reassuringly. "The City will remain, my son."

"And man?" Starnik persisted.

"Man will be dead."

Starnik breathed hard. This thought affected him greatly. He was young, large-headed, blue-eyed, and he contrasted in appearance sharply with the very old man who sat behind him. Starnik's skin pulsed pink-and-white, evidence of a heat-producing organ that evolution had given man, and he wore only a loin-cloth and sandals. But Arnik was so old that one could never believe he had been young. His skin was wrinkled, browned almost to blackness, and did not pulsate.

For this reason, he was wrapped in fold upon fold of a membranous material. And in the youth of the one, and the age of the other lay their terrible differences of attitude. Yet Arnik saw his son's inability to accept the idea of death.

"You are young, Starnik," he said with the smug patronage of age. "Some day you will understand that the forces of nature have aligned themselves so completely against us that it is useless to fight. Man will die."

"What about the City?" young Starnik asked. "Will that perish too?"

Exaltation glowed on old Arnik's face. "The City will survive. Our revered ancestors built it so it would withstand even the menace of the glacier. The City, buried beneath the ice, will be our monument, and we will not have died completely. This, Starnik, is our faith."

Starnik had been taught never to rebel against the Elders. But suddenly he turned in his chair.

"A poor faith!" he cried, bitterly. "Who in all the universe will care about the City when man is dead? What is the good of a corpse which does not hold the breath of life? No, father, we must fight—fight while there is yet time!"

ATERRIBLE pallor gripped Arnik's wizened face. He half rose from his chair.

"Stop!" he cried in shocked tones. "You speak of revolution, of breaking the rules of the Elder Body, the laws that our ancestors

laid down. I would not have thought my own son to utter such blasphemy. We are trapped in the City. There is no hope. Best to die graciously, proudly, as befits a brave man."

Father and son glared at each other as if riven asunder by a sudden bolt of lightning. Words trembled on the edge of Starnik's hot lips. Almost he told his father about the Younger Body, that secret organization in the City of which he was second in command. It was an organization which youths had formed, with passwords, a code, and a secret meeting place.

This organization was opposed to the stagnant principles of the Elder Body. But the words died, for even Starnik knew, deep in his heart, that the Younger Body was childish nonsense.

Earth truly offered no further refuge for man. Man was doomed!

He flung around in the seat, savagely sent the ice-tractor at renewed speed toward the tremendous ice-bastion which hemmed in man's last refuge.

Starnik was not the first young man who had taken to his bosom the near blasphemous thought that Man should fight against his encircling destiny. But it was at this moment, during Starnik's lifetime, that—the Ship came!

The Ship!

"Father, what is that?" Starnik asked.

Arnik was on his feet, holding on to the chair to keep his frail form erect. His eyes glittered with excitement as he looked up through the tractor's glass shield.

"A ship," he said.

A ship it must be. A long, slim shape, preceding roaring flashes of light, came thundering down out of the black sky, straight toward the icy escarpment.

It was going to crash!

But at the last second, the vessel looped away from the glacier, poised, fluttered down, and then in partial control hit the earth. A plume of chipped rock and snow went feathering into the air.

Starnik uttered a cry of wonder. The old failing *thermoid*-driven motors of the tractor screeched a protest as he hurled it along the crest of a ridge toward the ship from the skies.

He did not pause to consider that the inhabitants of the ship might be hostile until he was almost upon it. Then it was that a sudden cone of sparks gushed toward the tractor, lifted it straight into the air and

flung it to one side.

Starnik was thrown hard against the instrument board. His senses were numbed, but he cried his father's name. He clambered through the wreckage of the tractor, and found old Arnik's body, the sightless eyes fixed in death.

"Father!" Starnik cried, brokenly, sobbing with grief.

He straightened in blind rage, worked his way from the twisted door of the tractor, and with mindless, gnawing ire charged toward the ship.

Not until he was almost upon it did his blurred eyes see the alien, though humanoid, figures in the ship's airlock. Then it was too late to evade the curling whip of flame that snapped toward him, circled him like the coils of a snake, and drew him at incredible speed straight toward the open hatch in which green-scaled, reptilian-eyed beings stood. Again his mind blanked out.

* * * * *

The mental clock in Starnik's brain, which subconsciously recorded time for him to the exact second, told him that he had been senseless for only three minutes. He came to, found himself in an alien room, held erect by two beings who had arms and legs, but were undoubtedly of an amphibious reptile breed.

Starnik shuddered wildly as he saw their slowly opening and closing gills, their seven-fingered clawed hands, their crocodile mouths and bulging eyes. Also he smelled a faint, reptilian odor which was almost sickly sweet.

THEN his eyes settled upon a monster seated in a seven-legged chair, just as a voice, soft, soothing, seemed to enter his mind.

"Why did you not stop your vehicle when we asked if you were friendly, Earth Creature?"

Starnik looked at the aged, wrinkled being in the chair. His face was subtly kind, peaceful, harboring only good intentions.

Starnik trembled.

"We were friendly!" he whispered. "I had only a desire to help you. And then—then you killed my father!"

"Stay!" The aged being raised a scaled hand. His flat eyes showed astonishment. "I see the explanation now. When we were far above your city, out in space, we searched your city by means of a *tele-ray*, seeking to determine what kind of living things in-

habited this planet. But we did not know you conversed by means of vocal cords, a method which we have forgotten. We sent you a telepathic command to halt your vehicle, but I perceive now that your minds are not geared to receive such impulses from too great a distance. We slew your father unwittingly, not knowing your intentions. But—" and here the being's face glowed with kindness "—I promise you we shall make it up to you and your race. For, Being of Earth, we have come from a far-distant galaxy, and it is our purpose to give new life to your dead Sun so that the planet Earth may live again.

"I am known as the High One of Yarnan," the thoughts came, caressingly. "We of Yarnan have long ruled the galaxy and we have seen it dying. Our sole purpose is to renovate the universe so that dying races might again view the future without fear. I understand your hopeless fight against the glacier, you whom I now see call yourself Starnik, but I promise you that if you offer your help, the glacier shall—recede!"

CHAPTER II

Death Sentence

VIVID thought-words poured into Starnik's numbed mind. His grief was almost forgotten as he saw an illustrious, imaginary scene—the picture of a hot Sun in the sky, of an Earth that once more flowed with liquid ice—rivers and lakes and oceans of it! A new life for Man!

He trembled with longing, and the High One, as if reading his thoughts though he did not speak, nodded and rose.

"Come then, my friend Starnik. I shall show you how you can be the savior of your race."

Starnik followed after him, through the interior of the great ship. There were tens and tens of the beings—perhaps a hundred in all. They passed once through a great room where many of the intelligent reptiles disported—or slept—in a pool of clear greenish water.

In the after part of the ship, Starnik saw mighty machines, which the High One explained drove the ship.

"But all these machines are now useless," the High One said sadly. "We but barely

reached the planet Earth, thinking to save her from her fate, when the last of the *sorbal* gave out."

The telepathed image of *sorbal* leaped into Starnik's brain—an atomic picture which he recognized.

"*Sorbal*, an isotope of uranium." Starnik nodded. "But—but High One, we in the City have much *sorbal*. With it we power the City, stave off the cold that creeps from outside."

The High One drew his lustrous golden cloak about him and shook his strange head.

"Our instruments told us that," he said, still sadly. "With *sorbal* we had planned to power the mighty instruments with which to give renewed life to this Sun. *Sorbal* is a mighty metal, Starnik, and when we have enough quantities of it, we shall go close enough to the Sun to send atomic explosion rays against it."

"Your Sun is now a heavy cinder, but only because the electrons of the atoms have come so close to the protons that there is no interchange of energy between them. The electrons have but to be separated from the protons. The Sun will undergo a slow but sure explosion to four times its present size, under the influence of the atomic explosion rays. It will burn hotly, and for another billion years man will know life again."

He sighed. "But we have no *sorbal*."

Starnik shot out a pleading hand.

"Sire," he quavered. "I am but a young man of the city, a being of small consequence, and yet I might be of aid."

The High One shook his head dubiously, but at the same time Starnik felt his mind being searched. He felt instinctive anger at the intrusion, and with a shock, as if he had closed a door against the High One, felt the questing thought-tentacles removed.

The High One could not read his mind if Starnik forbade it!

The High One's eyes lidded slightly, then he resumed his benign expression. "No, Starnik, I fear the old ones of your City would not give us their *sorbal*. And should we enter the City, they would turn against us the ancient weapons they hold in vaults below the City."

"I would not go to the Elders," Starnik cried pleadingly. "There is the Younger Body! I am not the commander but I'll make them listen. Sire, if you will trust me with so important a mission, I'd like to try."

The High One raised a hand. For a mo-

ment he walked up and down thoughtfully. Finally he looked up, as if having made a decision. His flat eyes glowed, and in the manner of one granting a favor.

"Starnik, it is agreed," he said. "It is in your power to help us with our noble work. You shall bring the *sorbal* here, to this ship. And I shall see you soon again! Now, go!"

Starnik left at once. He was so overjoyed at being permitted to take part in the restoration of the Sun that he almost forgot his father until he was halfway to the City.

He gulped, regretting the last harsh words they had had. But it did not matter now. He would bring his father's body back for cremation after he had delivered the *sorbal*. Even his father, after the miracle of a reborn Sun, would grudgingly admit he had been wrong and that Starnik's task now was glorious.

AS THE Portal to the City slid open, Starnik practically fled past the gate-keeper, giving a flying description of a fictitious accident to the tractor. He walked with pounding heart down lonely, glowing streets, with fairy edifices on all sides spearing up to the dome which kept out much of the encircling cold. At last he noticed a blond haired youth walking toward him.

"Lorio," Starnik cried, grasping the young man's arm. "I was coming to your home. A very good evening to you!"

Lorio's eyes widened.

Be on the alert! Starnik had given him the code words.

He fell in beside Starnik, trying to keep his young face casual.

"You mean the time for the revolt draws near?" he said. When Starnik nodded slightly, Lorio, who was the Chief Commander of the Younger Body, forgot to appear casual.

"But Starnik, our secret organization is really not needed. It has the purpose of children. There is nothing to revolt against. There is nothing to fight."

Starnik's large blue eyes burned.

"There is something to fight," he cried. "Our organization was conceived as child's play, but now it must act according to the secret body of rules which you and I drew up so many years ago. Listen, Lorio—this will not be a revolt, but a theft. That is not so dangerous."

Lorio listened with growing wonder as the tale poured from Starnik's lips. Then his hand came out, gripped Starnik's in a ges-

ture that was as old as the human race, and as indicative of Lorio's pulsing emotions as no words could have been.

There was a historic meeting of the Younger Body that night, and a theft directly after the meeting. In the City lived about one thousand souls. Of these more than three quarters were youths, and some of them were married. All save those few who wore the gray and green uniforms of the Sentors, and acted to apprehend malefactors, belonged to the Younger Body.

None of the Younger Body thought to question Starnik's earnest story. None, in the face of Lorio's eloquence, could harbor doubts as to the intentions of the beings from the sky.

When the Younger Body left their Citadel far underground on the deserted edge of the City, excitement lent courage to their undertaking. Never before within the recorded history of man had youth rebelled against the desires of their elders—those elders who would soon be the ancestors they would hold in hallowed reverence.

Yet, never before had youth been given such an opportunity to rescue mankind from the doom that had lowered threateningly over it for uncounted milleniums!

Of fighting there was little. Indeed, so quietly and completely was the theft carried out that the great storerooms beneath the City—storerooms loaded with enough *sorbal*, or U-235, to power the City for many years after the glacier covered it—were emptied of fully half their valuable metal before the Senator in charge came running down the corridor.

Starnik himself wrestled with the Senator, took his weapon, bound and gagged him. Meantime, the long line of youths, boys and girls, younger or older than Starnik, trooped excitedly away with the heavy ingots, and dispersed throughout the city to a hundred different places where they could be loaded aboard waiting ice-tractors.

It was in the dead of night, when the glow-lamps, which lighted the great splendid uninhabited streets of a City that was too big for its tiny populace, had dimmed down to quarter power. There were four exits from the City, but only one of these was in use. By this exit, the ice-tractors must leave, loaded with their heavy burden.

Both Lorio and Starnik knew that now was no time for quiet. The tractors could not leave the City silently. So Lorio gave

the orders—and the night was split with the roar of the thermoid-motors!

They came weaving and grinding from all parts of the City, tens and tens of them. The City wakened. Elders leaped from their beds, were in the streets. Sentors rushed helplessly toward the tractors, but moved from their thundering path, with cries of anger and amazement.

The last tractors disappeared, unimpeded, through the huge lock, hurled themselves at full speed across the desert of frozen snow toward the alien spaceship which lay helpless near the grim ramparts of the ice-barrier.

REPTILE creatures from the skies were waiting outside when the ice-tractors came to stop in a triumphant arc. The members of the Younger Body tumbled from them, laughing and shouting, and then quieting suddenly, in awe, as they looked upon these creatures who were strange to them.

Starnik, with the swagger of youth, went toward the open hatch of the spaceship, but he was barred.

"But I am Starnik!" he cried angrily. "It was I who brought the *sorbal* for your master. The *sorbal* that will again give life to the Sun, and free mankind."

"The High One gives his respects to Starnik," came the thoughts of the suddenly cruel-eyed guard. "He asks that Starnik and his brave people return to the City when the *sorbal* has been unloaded from the tractors. When your Sun has been restored, then will the High One see you again."

Then the guard made a sound in his throat that sounded strangely like laughter.

Starnik felt a wave of cold fear creep over him. He was conscious of the hundreds of youths ringed behind him, trying to understand the import of the conversation. Soon in place of the cold, he felt a burning flush creeping up his neck.

He had thought to go into the presence of the High One, without trouble, and when Lorio and the others discovered that he had been snubbed, what would they think?

"Very well," Starnik quavered, trying to sound off-hand. "When the High One returns from his mission, I shall be very glad to see him." He added in a very low voice: "He will return?"

"He will return," the guard's thought-words came, with a strange undertone of amusement. "Have no fear of that. Now."

he turned to the bunched-together youths, "away from the hatch! We must load the sorbal!"

The strangely quiet members of the Younger Body understood the thought command. They quickly backed away, robbed of their excitement and laughter, somberly watched the crew of this great ship carrying heavy ingots into the ship, taking care not to touch the metal directly, for the moisture of their bodies would cause it to grow hot.

Starnik now took Lorio's arm with a soundless plea, and together they went to Starnik's wrecked tractor and lifted out old Arnik's broken body. There was a hole burned in his chest.

Lorio's face held a terrible dread.

"Perhaps, Starnik, the amphibians did not kill your father accidentally at all!" he whispered. "Perhaps they tried to kill him, knowing he would not agree to the plan of stealing the U-Two Thirty-five."

Starnik shuddered and shook his head. The implications of that thought were too dreadful for him to consider.

A terrible fear was Starnik's seat companion as his tractor, followed by the others, lumbered through into the City many minutes later. That fear crystallized as a voice, the voice of Elder Sanoog, snarled from loudspeakers located in every part of the City:

"Youths! All who aided in the theft of the U-Two Thirty-five from the Storerooms below the City will report to the Council Room of the Elder Body. At once! Those who do not report will be sentenced forever to the icelands beyond the City. Come at once!"

In the Council Room scarcely a hundred heartbeats later, Starnik, Lorio, Caset, Dras, Nonik—chief officers of the Younger Body—stood erect from the rest of the group, faced the frenzied Elder Body.

The scene that followed was enough to freeze Starnik's heart in his breast. He knew from the first that his defense was of no avail. His story, though truthful, brought only horror to the Elders. From the top observation rooms of the City, they had watched the tractors returning, had seen the great ship Starnik spoke of go flashing into space.

"But the High One will return," cried Starnik despairingly.

"They will not return!" Elder Sanoog roared, brandishing his thin arms hysterically. "Fools! Fools! What have you done? What have you done! The precious metal which alone can keep us alive until the

glacier comes is almost all in their possession. You were pawns—you, Starnik, a youth, pitted against a vile being with no honor. They will not return!"

Later, after a conference which seemed to last but a few moments, came the sentence.

Starnik, Lorio, and the others who were the ringleaders of the shameful Younger Body, listened. Starnik stood erect, but his lower lip trembled. Two of the youths broke down. Starnik and Lorio and Caset had a hard time of it, but each had to show dignity before the other. Yet, each knew that their sentence was—death.

Death in the outlands, with a tractor and a week's supply of food.

Exiles!

CHAPTER III

Servant of the High One

AS IT turned out, Starnik became the true exile after the tractor had wended its way across the terrible frozen world for more than two weeks.

No matter that it had been Starnik who led them to the frozen ocean and pointed into the hard-as-crystal ice at a giant sea-beast which had been entrapped and frozen there for uncounted eons. No matter that Starnik showed them how they might live indefinitely in this manner, living from the ice-hoarded dead creatures of the past.

The bitterness the four felt against him in their cramped quarters, even that of Lorio, showed in their actions. It was Starnik who had led them to this terrible, witless fight for survival on a dead world. He who had made the bargain with the High One.

They ignored Starnik at first, not having the heart to speak to him. Then, as the confinement of their lives mounted to a peak of irritation, harsh words were exchanged. When Lorio turned against him, Starnik could not believe it.

He shrank from their burning gaze.

"I repeat it," he said dully. "The Sun will be given new life. The High One will return. Then we will all be vindicated."

"You speak like a child," Lorio sneered. "No power in the universe could renovate a dead Sun—not one as dead as ours. Look at it—a red cinder. Fah, Starnik! I wish I had never met you!"

He turned away, as the others turned away, and went to work with their therma-sticks, cutting away great chunks of rock-hard blubber from a sea-creature which had been locked in the ice thirty feet down.

Starnik trembled. He was wearing a heavy, braided tunic now, protection in part against the blasting winds that swept across this desolate, endless ocean of ice. Very slowly he rose from the job, turned, silently clambered up the icy slope to the edge of the ice-pit. He called down in a raw, tremulous voice.

"Lorio—Caset—Dras!" he cried. "I go now. I can bear your hatred no longer. Good-by!"

He waited, hoping they would call him back, but they did not raise their heads or face him. They had heard.

Starnik turned blindly, running, across the ocean. Tears streamed on his cheeks. He was young, too young, and all the grief that had been stored inside him now came flooding out—the grief over his father's death being the greater now that he had nothing else to buoy him up.

Starnik would never know how many days now passed. His therma-blast kept him in food, but he soon noted that the pink-and-white pulsation of his skin was slowing in rhythm, and as that pulsation slowed, he felt the cold more and more keenly.

He was slowly dying. Even the "clock" in his subconscious did not function.

The days on the ice became a nightmare. His senses seemed to atrophy. His eyes were swollen, feverish; red, and he coughed.

One night he sank to the ice and was forced to leave his therma-blast on, spraying him with heat. He looked up at the sky, at the horizon, where the dead Sun had shortly settled to rest. He thought stupidly of the Sun. It was dead, as he soon would be.

He did not know how many days had passed, nor was he exactly aware when the Great Change came. But it did come, at the very moment when he knew he was near to death.

The Sun rose, and an unaccustomed warmth stole through his body. He could think nothing of it. His mind had been squeezed dry of all ability to rationalize. The Sun seemed brighter, hotter, but he would not let his imagination trick him.

Yet, he gained in strength, though not in reason.

One day, he was looking up at a solar body that hung pendant in the middle of the sky,

and it was a giant, four times as big as the Sun had ever been. It was white, and tremulous and seemed bursting with titanic, uncontrolled energies. He lifted his arms to it, savoring its imaginary warmth, and he thought, very dully, of what he would do.

"I'll go back to the City," he murmured.

In his mind, the reason for this decision was plain to him. He was delirious. He was seeing things that could not be. He would die, but perhaps he would see the City once more.

UNTIL he found the treads of the tractor in the snow atop the glacier, he traveled by night, following the dying stars. Then he traveled by day.

So it was that he came to the edge of the glacier, and looked down on the City, and at last knew, with a mental shock so great that he fell to his knees with a quivering outburst of senseless words, that it was true.

The dome of the City was like a dazzling globule of quicksilver lying on the floor of the valley below. It had never gleamed like that. Reason and intelligence swept back to Starnik, and he raised his arms to the sky with a low sob.

The High One had not lied. The Sun had been reborn . . .

Starnik scrambled, crawled, slipped and slid down the precipitous, jagged face of the glacier. He reached the valley, ran with long-legged steps toward the City, walked for a while, breathing hard, then ran again.

He was no more than a mile away, when coming to the crest of a ridge, he thought he saw a figure slowly, slowly coming in his direction, across the snow.

Even as he looked, the figure weaved and fell!

Starnik was puzzled. It looked like a man. He ran toward the man, and came upon him, face down in the snow, motionless.

Starnik kneeled, rolled the man—youth—over.

His face whitened.

"Lorio!" he whispered in abject horror. "Lorio!"

Lorio's dying eyes opened. His blond hair was matted with blood and there were blood and strange, lacerated wounds all over his body.

Lorio's eyes rolled. His mouth sagged open.

"Lorio, quick!" Starnik almost screamed the words. "Who did this to you?"

Lorio's eyes were pleading.

"Forgive us, Starnik," he whispered. "We did not mean to let you go. When we saw the—Sun—we looked for you. We—went back to the City. The amphibious ones—had returned. I did not want—to work—for them—a slave. . . . The Elders—knew best, Starnik. Better—"

Starnik frantically leaned closer.

"—better for us—to die—than this. . . . I fought—they clawed me, beat me—thrust me outside the City—to die. . . ."

Lorio's hand closed with sudden, dreadful clasp on Starnik's arm. His scarred, bleeding face contorted in the grimace of death. Then his eyes rolled until only the whites were showing and his head dropped back. Lorio, Chief Commander of the Younger Body, was dead!

Starnik was now Chief Commander.

Starnik rose to his full height. There was on his face a terrible look that made him old, even older than his dead father had been. Then, not once more looking at Lorio, he walked with even pace toward the City, the cold rage in him crystallizing until it was a hard, icy lump of purpose in his ravaged brain. . . .

The Portal to the City slowly slid aside, and Starnik held himself rigid as he saw a scale-hided amphibian looking at him from greenish, reptilian eyes.

"I am Starnik," he said. "I was lost outside the City when my people thrust me into exile. It was I who brought the *sorbal* to the High One. The High One said he would speak with me when he returned."

The Portal guard looked him up and down. With a deft, clawed finger he took the therma-blast from Starnik's side.

"I do not wish to harm the High One," Starnik said coldly. "I wish to serve him, for through him I can perhaps revenge myself on the Elders of my race, who wished me to die."

The guard's thin lips writhed suspiciously. Starnik told his story, how he knew the High One had returned, was ruling the City. He allowed his terrible hatred for Lorio and the other youths to creep into his words, and at this, the guard turned to the strange, drumlike object on the wall and looked at it for a long moment.

He turned back.

"Very well," his snarling thought-words came. "I have spoken to the High One's lieutenant. The High One will see you at once."

HE CALLED a subordinate with an imperative movement, and him Starnik followed, along the streets, through arcades, and finally into a building which Starnik knew well. He gasped. It was the Recreation Building, where he and many of his friends had disported themselves in the swimming pools. In one of the smaller pools in the north wing, completely buried in the water, and apparently asleep, Starnik saw the aged, wrinkled, leaf-green body of the High One!

The High One, however, knew of Starnik's presence, for his thoughts immediately hurled themselves into Starnik's mind.

"Ah, Starnik! You have come to pay tribute to the master of the Earth?"

Starnik sensed his amusement and trembled inwardly with rage.

"I have come, High One, to thank you for bringing life once more to this planet," he said. "My life is yours to command, and I would that I could serve you as your slave."

The eyes of the High One turned benign.

"I understand your hatred for your people, Starnik, and as a reward for bringing us the *sorbal* your request shall be granted."

The High One turned languidly in the pool, bumped gently up from the bottom, then settled to the bottom again. His thoughts came lazily.

"Those who cooperate with us shall receive their reward when the rest of the population of Yarnan comes, Starnik," the reptile said. "As soon as the ice melts in the oceans and the lakes, they will come in all their billions. Our world of Yarnan is drying up, Starnik, and it was indeed great luck which brought us to this System after we had searched for years for a planet suitable to sustain our type of life. In a few months I shall send a message to Yarnan."

His thoughts dribbled away, and the guard motioned to Starnik.

"Come," the guard said. "The High One sleeps. I will take you to the Under-officer, who will instruct you in your duties."

In the weeks which followed, Starnik kept his mind open, filling it with the true facts. He was given a uniform of splendid green, and complete freedom of the city. To those of his former comrades who had been his friends, he spoke nothing, giving them only glances of dislike. Once, deliberately swaggering about the city, in plain sight of several of the creatures from Yarnan, Starnik kicked out at a youth who crossed his path.

"Out of my way," he cried. "You who

deserted me!"

It was Caset, one of the officers of the Younger Body. He was knocked sprawling, and a basket of fruits which he had been taking to his amphibious master from the gardens went flying. His eyes widened first in amazement, then in furious, blazing anger. He would have thrown himself at Starnik, had not a guard intervened, thrusting him back on the pavement.

"Traitor!" cried Caset.

"A very good evening to you, Comrade Caset," Starnik cried scornfully. "Do not venture near me again!"

He stalked on, but behind him Caset stood as if turned to stone. Then he quickly gathered up his fruit, and several other youths, who had watched the scene, went off on their duties also.

The Elders, numbering one hundred and fifty, Starnik learned, were imprisoned beneath the City in the old cells which had housed lawbreakers centuries ago. Once, on his way to the loom-shops to secure a fine golden cloth which was to form a new robe for the High One, Starnik passed the cells and saw the Elder Sanoog.

The old man, looking terribly aged, hobbled slowly toward Starnik.

"Starnik, the stories about you cannot be true," he begged. "They say you have turned on us, that you hate us. Starnik, tell an old man it is not so, so that I may die in peace!"

Starnik laughed and spat.

"The stories are true!" he cried. "You thrust me from the City. Do not expect any mercy!"

Sanoog drew himself up.

"Starnik, your sentence was just. Even after we welcomed the High One as he returned from his task of reclaiming the Sun, thinking he was a friend, even after that, I would not have rescinded the sentence. It was just. But now that the High One has tricked us, has enslaved us, your crime is all the more terrible. Look well to your conscience, Starnik!"

But Starnik laughed callously, his hands in the pockets of his uniform. He swaggered off toward the weaving rooms and the gardens and the kitchens where most of the youths were slaving endlessly, preparing clothings and luxuries for the amphibians who now were lords of the City, and also for those who many months from now would start to arrive from the drying world of Yarnan.

Starnik, under the eyes a guard, stopped near a loom where a young girl was working. She looked at him coldly.

"A very good evening to you, Miss Hinza," he said, leering, and passed on.

Her eyes widened. She dropped her face, quickly went back to her work. But she moved closer to the youth with whom she was working.

"A very good evening to you," she whispered. "The Chief Commander wishes it to you!"

As Starnik came back along that line again, she cast him one flickering glance. Starnik nodded, very briefly, but did not alter his aloof expression.

"A very good evening to you."

"Be on the alert!" That had been Starnik's message. . . .

Thus it was that Starnik, Chief Commander of the Younger Body, made known to the youth of the City his true feelings.

Since by his actions, he continually added to the trust in which the amphibians held him, he automatically became an Over-officer of those youths who directly served the slightly more than one hundred amphibians in the City.

It was he who directed them in their deportment toward the amphibians, so that the amphibians might have every comfort. He made certain their every whim, down to the temperature of the pools of water in which they had to soak themselves for hours daily, was taken care of.

But even with guards looking on, Starnik was able to insert various significant coded phrases which the Younger Body members understood, but which the guards did not.

There were other ways beside speech in which he was able to communicate his plan. For instance, by holding his little finger in such a manner that it designated a "U" . . . and a motion of lips which meant "water."

All the childish code messages which the youth of the City had evolved as a means of fighting the repression foisted upon them by the Elder Body. Youth against age. In those days, before the amphibians had come, it was childish nonsense, and gave the youths a false feeling of importance. But now it was serving a deadly serious purpose!

As the weeks passed, all the members of the Younger Body were engaged in a carefully calculated game of theft. The same theft, on a smaller scale, that had given the creatures from Yarnan the *sorbal* to rehabili-

tate the Sun.

Day by day, little packages wrapped in dry, water-proof cloth passed from hand to hand, found their way into the possession of those youths who served the lords of the City. Day by day, carefully concealed on his person, Starnik received his quota, until his uniform was so heavy that he was afraid the bulges would give him away.

It was the old game of sabotage all over again, and an underground organization of liberators was working full blast!

CHAPTER IV

Blow For Freedom

STARNIK was trying in vain to control his excitement.

"You are nervous tonight," said the High One of Yarnan.

He handed Starnik his robe and stood in naked, taloned ugliness on the edge of his pool, eying Starnik suspiciously.

Starnik's heart was thudding, but he had long since learned that he could close his thoughts off from the amphibians.

He contrived a troubled expression.

"There is a girl," he said bitterly, as if that were explanation enough.

The High One nodded.

"If you wish, Starnik, you may—choose any girl of your species whom you desire," he said carelessly, and smiled with his eyes that showed so much wisdom, so much benignity—falsely, Starnik now knew. Then the High One dropped into the pool, parting the water cleanly, swimming with long strokes of his powerful arms.

Bubbles rose to the surface from his contracting and expanding gills. He was old, the High One, but in his natural habitat he moved with sure, mighty grace.

Starnik looked around the small room. There were three exits. Starnik had locked two of them. Soon, he would lock the third.

In his mind, the mental clock which was one of the senses that evolution had provided man was ticking away the passing seconds. The zero hour was coming. Ten seconds, nine, eight, seven. . . .

Starnik stood at the edge of the pool, watching the waves churned into a froth. His face was white. Six, five seconds. The clock in his mind ticked on.

At this moment, thirty guards patrolled the city, never dreaming of the terrible fate their fellow amphibians were to meet. Never dreaming that at a concerted moment they themselves would be attacked.

At this moment, all save thirty amphibians, true to the rigid schedule of their lives, were immersed in their pools of water.

The right moment arrived. It was time to act!

Starnik breathed hard, drew a flat heavy package from next to his chest. He threw it, retaining one edge of the wrapping paper.

The package unrolled, and ten pounds of *sorbal* splashed into the water, plummeted down. It struck bottom, the separate tiny pieces bounding out from each other; and immediately tiny bubbles formed around them.

Those bubbles grew with shattering speed. The water turned white, the whiteness rushed up, seemed to explode on the surface. A wave of heat struck at Starnik. He leaped back with an involuntary cry as a cloud of steam leaped with fury to the ceiling.

The surface of the pool bubbled with a gargantuan gurgling sound. Suddenly the room was hot with tremendous exploding vapors. Through that mist Starnik saw the High One suddenly fling himself like a maddened flying fish from the water into the air. He fell short of the edge of the boiling pool, and his raging thought-cry stunned Starnik's mind.

"Starnik! Starnik!"

Cruel waves of pain beat against Starnik's mind. He stood like a rock, steam clouding around him, saw the High One once more shoot writhing into the air, screaming with vocal cords he did not ordinarily use. He flopped on the edge of the pool like a lizard on a hot griddle, then was on his legs, flying toward Starnik, screaming thought-words.

For one last horrible minute Starnik looked at that ghastly, bleached-out specter of a reptilian face, at the boiled white hideous scaled skin of the being who had betrayed him and his people. Then he stepped backward, slammed the door and locked it.

He leaned there for a moment, sickened. He whirled as there was the slither of a reptilian foot behind him. Just in time, for a guard came hurtling toward him, pulling at his weapon, whose snake-like coils Starnik had experienced before.

"The High One screams my name!" the guard cried. "What have you done?"

STARNIK rushed in, caught his arm, received a staggering blow across the face. Blood spurted into his eyes, stained his fine green uniform. He fell, dizzily saw the reptile bringing the butt of his gun with exploding fury down into his face.

Starnik screamed, took the blow on his upraised arm, and felt bone shatter. But he used the impetus of that motion to roll over, to take the reptilian head with both hands and—twist. Savagely. Something snapped. The amphibian slumped.

Starnik's arm hung limp as he staggered from the Recreation Building. Vaguely, through the blood in his eyes, he could see other youths converging toward him, yelling with blood-lust. The whole city was in an uproar. Another guard came toward Starnik and Starnik dropped to his knees. He saw his onrushing doom but was robbed of strength to avert it.

A familiar figure hurled itself into Starnik's line of vision. Caset!

The youth's long fingers wrapped around the reptile's ankle. The reptile fell. It was immediately buried in a heap of enraged, murderous youths.

Starnik felt his mind slip into a black nothingness that must be death. . . .

It was the faces of Sanoog and Caset, together with a great many more, which looked anxiously down at Starnik when his eyes opened.

Elder Sanoog gripped Starnik's hand. His fierce old eyes were misted. For a moment he could not speak.

"Caset and the others told me how you saved us," Sanoog said. "How you used the Younger Body—how they stole bits of U-two thirty-five from the city's machines."

"It was a great plan, Elder Sanoog," Caset agreed, his eyes glowing. "And to Starnik goes all the credit. When the moment came, the Younger Body was ready to turn on the guards, even at the cost of their own lives. And—" Caset's face fell.

"Did any die?" Starnik asked, quickly.

The youths surrounding him could not speak. It was the Elder Sanoog who answered.

"Ten gave themselves for the liberation of the City," he said. "But the amphibians are dead, for the most part dying so quickly they

could have felt little pain or have been conscious of their deaths. We found them in their pools, with the U-Two Thirty-five lying unchanged on the dry bottoms. The steam escaped under the doors. Those not in the pools died according to your plan."

The youths burst into questions, but Caset stopped them with the scornfulness of youth.

"Simple," he declared loftily. "Uranium Two Thirty-five has been the wonder metal of the human race for millions of years. With it we have heated and powered the City for longer than memory. Tiny bits of it dropped into water form steam which operates pistons.

"Loose neutrons in the water bombard neutrons in the *sorbal*—the U-Two Thirty-five—which released gamma rays that in turn, create more loose neutrons in the water to cause more gamma rays to radiate from the *sorbal*! Such terrific heat is generated in this manner, instantaneously, that—well, the amphibians tricked us into giving them our *sorbal*, and then stole our watery world into the bargain.

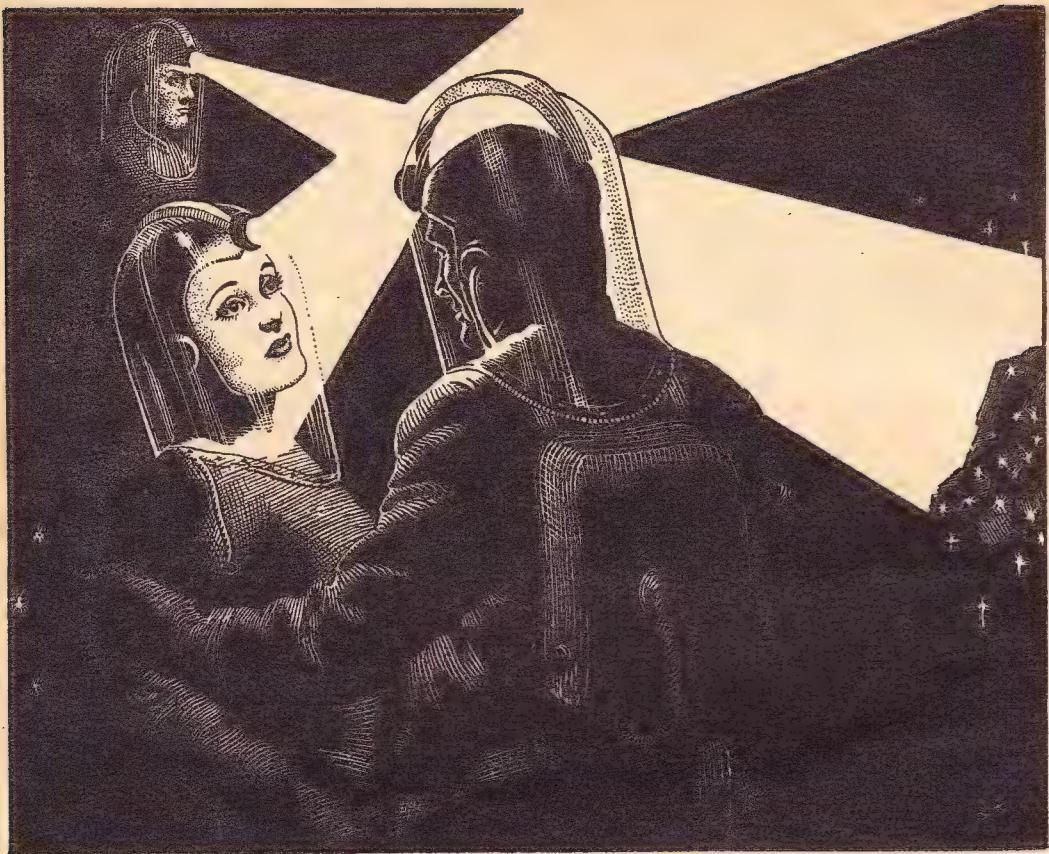
"It was Starnik's idea to give them both at the same time!"

Laughter, such laughter as Starnik had never thought to hear again, ascended from the youths. The amphibians were dead, and it was the Younger Body which had accomplished the liberation. Nor would the world of Yarnan, fathomless light-years distant, ever know of the watery planet Earth, for the High One had not informed them of the discovery, preferring to wait until Earth was truly watery.

The Elder Sanoog now stood erect, slowly, as if he were seeing a truth that had not crossed his mind before.

"To the young belongs the future," he said, pacing the words with great meaning. "We, the aged, sought to close ourselves in to wait for extinction gracefully. But in waiting for death there is no grace and no self-respect. Better to fight, and then die, if need be. It is my promise that you, the Younger Body, shall continue. But this time we shall weigh decisions between us."

"That's true," Starnik said softly, thinking—as he knew they were all thinking—of the Sun that in years to come would bring new life, new hope to Earth. "Better to fight—and win!"



"Are you shivering?" Bob asked, looking sharply at Aly

ZERO

By NOEL LOOMIS

For daring to believe in the existence of absolute cold, young space flyer Bob Parker risks banishment to the Moon!

ALYS met him at the door. "Father's in the laboratory," she said listlessly. Lieutenant Robert Parker, in the light blue uniform of the Space Marine troopers, took her by the elbows.

"Blow the clouds out of those brown eyes," he said softly.

She shook her head despairingly. "But Bob, you know the rules."

"It isn't against the law to experiment," he reminded her.

"But father doesn't just experiment. He talks about it—to everybody."

"Nobody pays any attention," Bob said.

She drew back and looked at him. "General Hunt was here this morning."

Parker's pretense of lightness disappeared when she said that.

"He wants me to commit father to the Lunar Mental Colony for spreading propaganda about absolute zero."

"They can't do that," Parker said, but he wasn't convincing.

"If I don't commit him, they will take him before the Board—and you know what would happen. Father would consider it an opportunity to prove his theory."

"They'd send him up for life." Lieutenant

Parker nodded slowly. He was thoughtful for a moment. "I'll talk to him," he said. "Maybe I can at least persuade him to be quiet when he appears before the Board."

But Parker didn't have a chance with Dr. Case. The little man with the sparse white hair and the gentle blue eyes, was exuberant.

"Congratulate me, Bob. I'm within one ten-thousandth of one degree. One ten-thousandth!"

Parker shook hands without fervor. "You know you can't reach absolute zero. It's been proved."

"You're talking in the Nineteenth Century," said Dr. Case, his eyes glowing, "that was when Euclidean geometry said two parallel lines would never meet. But Einstein proved them wrong, didn't he? I'm going to succeed!"

"This is the Twenty-third Century," Bob reminded him. "Science is supposed to be pretty well stabilized."

Dr. Case snorted. Then he dismissed the argument and took Parker over to a viewing-screen. "Look through the quartz, there."

BOB PARKER looked. All he could see was machinery, and pipes covered with ice.

"I'm back to the old theory of magnetization of the atomic nuclear cores of paramagnetic salts. The salts are cooled with liquid xenon within one degree, and then treated with a hundred-million-volt magnet."

Nobody but the members of the Mentalion Board could have been unaffected by the old man's enthusiasm.

"See these." He spread a sheaf of photographs that showed triangular shapes arranged in symmetrical curves. "My electronoscope shows the movement at twenty-four-hour intervals. Note this series." He pointed. "No line of atoms has moved more than six microns in a week. My calculations show the result to be two seventy-three, point, one five one nine degrees Centigrade. One ten-thousandth from the absolute, Bob!"

But the young Marinetrooper was sober. "I know," he said. "When the atoms on successive photographs align perfectly, it means no movement whatever, and that is absolute zero. But others have come close, Dr. Case. The point is that by the very nature of things there can be no absolute zero, because at that point there can be no movement of atoms, and therefore the materials you use to induce zero would cease to exist as such and would no longer function."

But Dr. Case wasn't even listening. "Only one thing is lacking—a perfect insulator. The freezing-chest is lined with three feet of solid kryptad, but at such low temperatures, even kryptad loses some of its resistance. If I could find a perfect insulator—wait, I've

got an idea!"

Bob Parker groaned. The Board of Hygienic Mentalion would commit Dr. Case without a second thought.

Parker was low when he reached his quarters at the Third Spaceport, but young Joe Deever, serving his fourth year of preparation, was waiting for him. He handed him an envelope.

"From the general," Deever said.

Parker read it and his eyes brightened. "I'll be back in a little while," he told Joe. "And you'd better pack your tooth-brush."

The general was a man of directness. A prospector back from a swing around Uranus had some trouble with his compressor and wound up in Pluto's field. He claimed his indicators showed life on Pluto before he got his ship repaired. I want you to take one of those new jobs and make a check."

"You mean a spectro-drive reconnaissance, sir?" Bob tried not to be eager.

The general was gruff. "Why not?"

"Thank you, sir."

"Find out what you can. Nobody actually knows anything about Pluto, and we've always taken it for granted as a lifeless planet. Better carry plenty of fighting equipment for protection, and some kryptad suits. It'll be cold. But don't start anything if you can avoid it. Be back in two weeks. You're up for promotion."

"Yes, sir!"

"And, Lieutenant."

"Yes, sir."

"About this girl."

"What girl, sir?"

The general looked at him sharply. "Don't play dead on me, Lieutenant."

"Yes, sir. Alys Case, sir."

"You'd better quit seeing her, if you're thinking of marriage."

Parker stared at him.

"Old Dr. Case is still trying for absolute zero."

"But, sir—"

"You spent five years post-graduate at the Space Academy, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you majored in sub-thermal biochemistry."

"Yes, sir."

"Then," the general said dryly, "you know that absolute zero has been proved unattainable."

PARKER was silent.

"I shall have to commit him to Luna, in spite of the fact that I like the old coot—and obviously you can't marry the daughter of a committed person."

Bob Parker drew a deep breath, but the general did not give him a chance to answer.

"You would be forced to resign, and of course, at the first sign of eccentricity, she also would be committed."

"I don't want to marry anyone but Alys, sir," Parker said stiffly.

"Old-fashioned, eh? Well, that's the situation, Lieutenant. Study it over on your trip."

"Yes, sir." Parker saluted, stood rigid an instant, then wheeled and left. . . .

The spectro-drive was a sweet job. Lieutenant Parker turned the controls over to Joe Deever, while he himself checked the intensifiers and thrilled to the steady sucking of the compression pumps, that spelled power beyond even atomic disintegration.

"A hundred years ago, they said speed faster than light was unattainable," Parker said thoughtfully. "They sent a couple of hundred men to the Lunar colony for trying it. Then my great-grandfather came along and developed this spectro-drive before they knew he was working on it."

Joe Deever didn't answer for a moment. "Under the rules they had to release everybody who was imprisoned for that offense, didn't they?" he said at last.

"That's right," Parker looked at him.

"I was hoping that Dr. Case would reach the absolute," Deever said slowly. "My father—" He stopped.

Bob Parker rubbed his chin. He knew what Deever was hoping. Deever's father was on Luna for talking about absolute zero, and if Dr. Case succeeded everything would be fine.

"How do they expect things to be done if they won't let a man try?" Parker adjusted the rear port intensifier. They were drawing far away from the sun now, past Jupiter's orbit, and presently he would start tuning the intensifiers in on Arcturus.

"What about Alys?" asked Deever, and added abruptly, "Sir."

"I'm going to marry her," Parker said stubbornly.

"The Commission will never sanction it, sir. And if you're discharged from the Marines, you'll be an earthlubber the rest of your life."

"I know. But I'm going to risk that."

"Oh, no, you're not."

Bob Parker straightened up and wheeled around. He looked at Joe Deever. Joe Deever was looking at him. "Did you say something, sir?"

"I heard something—but there's nobody here but us."

"Nobody but us girls," said a soft voice. "Let me out, Bob. I'm in the food-locker."

Parker strode to the locker. The door slid up and Alys stepped out, smiling.

"You sap!" Parker blurted out.

"Stowed away," she admitted, and then

abruptly clung to him. "They took father this morning, Bob, and I didn't know what else to do. I thought I could be with you a little while, anyway—because they'll take me when they find me. I put up an awful fuss, Bob."

"That's against the rules," Parker said.

"Everything's against the rules," she sobbed. "It's against the rules for me to be here. I know it, but I don't care. And you can't take me back now." She looked up at him. "They're hunting me, you know."

"Yes. But this won't do."

"They can't give you any demarks, if I tell them I stowed away," she reminded him. "I'm the only one they can hurt—and they can't hurt me any more." Her voice was listless.

Lieutenant Parker's shoulders sagged. He didn't answer. . . .

Pluto filled the plates as a black ovoid in a purple sea. They circled the planet five times.

"I don't see anything that looks alive," said Joe Deever. He was moving the atomic spotlight over a harsh, frozen surface that showed nothing but rugged masses of deep purple crystals.

"Then set her down," Parker ordered. When the ship came to rest, he checked the instruments. "Gravity point six seven. No atmosphere. And temperature—temperature is—" He looked closely. "What in the name of the System!"

ALYS looked at his face, and came to his side quickly. "What is it, Bob?"

He looked again. "The atomometer shows zero," he said slowly.

Alys clutched his arm. "Do you mean—absolute zero, Bob?"

He touched her arm gently, his eyes on the intricate series of dials. He saw young Joe Deever watching hopefully.

"Let's don't get optimistic," he said. "This thing is calibrated to only one tenth of a degree. It would show the same with Dr. Case's experiments. Photographs are the only things that give real proof."

"Then we have to take some," said Alys.

"I'm afraid we'll be disappointed, but I'll take a couple." He set the instrument. Next they got kryptad suits from the lockers, checked the oxygen tanks in them, and tuned the individual heaters on the ship's power system.

"You can adjust these heaters, but they get weaker as you draw away from the ship," he told them. "Extreme range is about four kilometers. If you get lost, that's one way to check directions."

"What about weapons?" asked Joe Deever.

"Heat-rays, I think, and maybe atomic blasters."

They went into the air-lock. Alys turned on her speaking unit.

"What will it be like, to step out on another planet?" she asked, a little anxious.

Bob Parker dismissed her uncertainty with a shrug. "Just like Earth," he said. "A little colder, a lot darker. You'll lose about fifty pounds all of a sudden."

She looked at him primly. "I didn't know I was too heavy."

"Break it up," muttered Joe Deever.

Parker unscrewed the outer door. "This is it," he announced, and stepped down.

Their atom-lights made sharp-cut swaths of light. There was no diffusion because there was no air, and so nothing was at all visible except what appeared in the path of their lights. There was no sign of life, no indication of any artificial structure—only a purple-black crystalline surface that glittered where the lights hit it.

Parker kicked the surface with the spike in his toe.

He picked up a piece of the purple stuff and examined it.

"I'd say it is one of the rarer gases in earth atmosphere, solidified by the cold."

"That would be argon or neon," said Alys. "They've never been solidified on Earth."

"Probably. The cold must have solidified it before it could be whirled away. This is a small planet. Its gravitation wouldn't hold ordinary atmosphere."

"I'm cold," Alys said.

Parker frowned. "I am, too. We'd better turn up the heaters."

They made a circle around the ship at a distance of three kilometers, but saw nothing but the black world that turned purple in their lights.

"It looks good enough to eat," Alys said.

Movement was easy. They floated along, covering the surface in eight-foot strides. But the cold kept seeping in, and finally Parker turned the heater on full power.

"It may not be zero, but it isn't summertime, either," Parker said.

They topped a long ridge and flashed their spotlights down it.

"With the infra-red filters we could see a long way," Bob said. "And if there is any life, it should be attracted by our lights. I guess there's nothing around here. We'll try another spot." He looked sharply at Alys. "Are you shivering?"

"Uh-huh. My heater isn't working right, I guess."

"Mine isn't, either," said Joe Deever.

Parker looked at the intake meter on his belt. "That's strange. We're getting full power from the ship. And I'm cold, too." He examined his mass-detector. "Do you know we're six kilometers from the ship?" he asked suddenly.

DEEVER uttered a sigh of relief. "Oh, that's it." "My hands are getting numb."

"No, that isn't it," said Bob. "We're getting full power. Something's wrong here. In the first place, we shouldn't get any power at all, this far. In the second place, it isn't keeping us warm."

Alys Case came closer. "Shouldn't we start back?"

Parker's face was puzzled in the glow from his helmet-light.

"Yes," he said slowly. "We'd better."

They didn't get back too soon. Two of Deever's fingers were slightly frozen, and Parker put him under the sulfa-ray for fifteen minutes, while he checked the heat-generator. He was more puzzled when he finished.

"It's putting out the stuff," he said. "And the kryptad suits are ninety-nine per cent efficient as insulators. We were out about two hours, but we lost heat, even though we were getting all the generator put out."

"Maybe it's the suit," said Deever from under the lamp.

Parker examined them. "They're new suits, and thoroughly tested at minus two-seven." He hooked one up with a thermometer inside, and checked the temperature against the ship's chronometer. When he got through he shook his head.

"Do you think there's any mistake?" Deever began hopefully, while Alys tried to read Parker's face.

Bob Parker straightened and frowned. "I know what you're both thinking—that maybe the temperature on Pluto is zero. And it might be, though we wouldn't be able to prove it."

"The electronographs!" Alys said quickly.

Parker looked at her and nodded. He went to the big camera. He took out a series of plates and superimposed on them a synchronized grid. When they were developed, he picked a section on each one, enlarged it another hundred diameters, and began to measure through a microscope. Presently he looked up and his eyes were shining.

"I can't detect any movement of the atoms," he said.

Alys jumped up. "It's zero!" she cried. "It has to be zero."

Joe Deever took a deep breath. He wet his lips, looking at Bob Parker. He didn't say anything, but his face was filled with hope.

"Of course these picture cover only about three hours altogether," Parker said, trying to be conservative. "That length of time wouldn't be conclusive."

"We could stay twenty-four hours," Alys said eagerly. "That'll settle it."

Parker smiled at her. "We'll finish exploring the planet first. We'll divide the surface

of Pluto into eight sections and cover each one briefly. We should be able to discern some sign of life if there is any. But don't forget this," he warned them. "If we do find life, absolute zero is out, because nothing can exist at that temperature."

Joe Deever spoke up. "Didn't you say we were six kilometers from the ship, and the heat-rays were still coming through? That would indicate zero temperature. No resistance."

Parker tried not to be too hopeful. "Even a Space Marine officer's word wouldn't be accepted against the proof—on Earth—that zero is unattainable."

But he started the ship. "We'll just use the detectors, now that we've actually set foot on Pluto already. We can cover the planet in a few hours."

Half a day later they had finished weaving the standard exploratory pattern around the planet, but the electronic brain-wave tubes, that would pick up the radiations of an anti-brain at a thousand kilometers, remained completely dead.

Parker could hardly restrain the jubilance in his voice when he set the ship down again.

"No life," he said. "That helps our theory a little. If we can put up a strong-enough argument, we might get an expedition out here."

Joe Deever was cheerful as Alys helped them set the big electronic camera.

"Let's go out and check that heat-ray phenomenon again," he suggested.

"Let's do," said Alys.

THEY put on their suits and went through the lock and stepped out on the purple ice. Bob Parker tramped straight out from the ship, and presently his voice came to them.

"I'm ten kilometers," he said. "Getting cold. Heat intake is still at full capacity, but the temperature in my suit is dropping."

"I'm back at the ship," Joe answered. "I haven't been over a kilometer away, and suit temperature is down to minus twelve."

"I'm cold," said Alys. Her teeth chattered in the earphones. Parker was back in a few minutes, and they opened the lock and entered quickly.

"What was that?" Parker asked, as they went through the inner door.

"What was what?" asked Joe.

Parker looked around at the floor. "I thought something came in past me."

"I didn't see anything," said Deever.

Alys smiled. "Spaceman's spots," she said. Parker nodded. "Maybe."

They made three more trips, with the same results. At the end of the twenty-four hours Bob Parker developed the plates. He measured carefully, and finally he sat back. He couldn't keep from smiling.

"This is it!" he said.

Joe Deever yelled, and Alys Case acted as if she was going to faint.

"If we can only get them to come out here," she whispered.

"We'll do it," Parker said, and turned on the intensifiers.

They were in to Neptune's orbit when Parker turned the controls over to Joe Deever and began a thorough recheck of the plates. By the time they reached the Uranian orbit he had satisfied himself that the series of twenty-four photographs showed no alteration whatever in the alignment of the atoms.

"It's a shame we couldn't catch a little of that cold in a bottle and take it back," he said, getting up.

"We could, if we had a perfect insulator," Deever answered.

Parker wandered over to the brain-wave detector. "And no life—" he started to say, then stopped and stared at the graph.

Alys saw his face and turned pale. She hurried to his side and looked at the graph. Bob pointed to a red line that started at zero and rose vertically to 300—the top of the graph—and ran straight on, off the edge of the sheet. Five minutes later, by the graph, it started at the top edge of the sheet and dropped in a straight line back to zero.

That was all. According to the graph, it hadn't existed before the five-minute period, and had ceased to exist after it. But for five minutes, a powerful brain with over three times the intelligence of a human brain had been within detecting distance of the brain-wave tube.

"That couldn't be," Parker said finally. "If such an intelligence had come within detection distance, the graph would show a gradual rise, no matter what the physical speed of the intelligence. But this line is a perpendicular. According to the graph, its appearance was spontaneous, as well as its disappearance."

"What time was it recorded?" asked Deever.

Parker looked. "About half an hour before we left Pluto," he said glumly.

Alys sank into a chair. "Then there's life on Pluto. That means it couldn't be zero there, because at zero nothing can exist," she said hopelessly.

Parker looked grave. "I'm afraid you're right."

* * *

The Bryd was in the food-locker. And very pleased to be there. Not that it was hungry, for its food was energy, and it was quite able to convert any form of matter to its needs. So for the millions of years, since it had foolishly left its comet-home to explore Pluto, it had roamed the purple-black planet

at will and had fed itself very well.

The Bryd was lonesome. In fact, that was what had inspired it to leave the comet in the first place, for in the eons of time that had passed since its creation, it could not remember having had companionship, unless it counted that brief period of sixty million years between comets when it had lived on the eighth planet of Arcturus' fifth sun, with a race of dinosaurs whose only thoughts were to eat and reproduce themselves.

AFTER getting onto Pluto, the Bryd soon realized that it hadn't used good judgment in its comet-hopping.

For one thing, it had discovered to its astonishment that a cold planet wasn't conducive to life-forms of any description. For another thing, its ability to travel through space was limited to distances of a few million miles, and by the time it had examined Pluto it was too exhausted to catch the comet again.

So there'd been nothing to do but wait, until that day when the life-emanations roused it from its sleep and it had sent out its strongest waves to let them know it existed. The Bryd had been well pleased when, a while later, the life-emanations had returned. The Bryd had followed the spaceship as it circled Pluto and then had slipped into the boat with these creatures.

It didn't know where it was going, but it was on its way—and, for the first time in its long existence—not alone.

It opened its intelligence briefly to search the minds of the three creatures on the ship, and then, well satisfied, closed its mind and settled down for a peaceful nap.

A few hours later it awoke feeling very good indeed. It got out of the locker by simply flowing through the extremely wide spaces between the electrons of the locker-door. It decided to make itself visible in some form that would be recognized by these three creatures, so it opened a small corner of its intelligence and probed their minds for a few minutes.

Parker was talking. "When I get home, I'm going to the Spaceport bakery and get a loaf of old-fashioned white bread."

Alys laughed at him. "There's your loaf of bread on the floor," she said, and pointed.

Parker looked. He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

"It's moving," he said. "It's more like a little white dog, curled up."

Alys looked and rubbed her own eyes. "It has legs, I do believe—and a head—and a tail."

Joe Deever turned around. "What's eating you two? You sound space-silly to me." Then he saw where they were looking and his eyes bulged. "Where did that come

from?" he asked.

Bob blinked and frowned. He bent closer.

"Where did it come from? I haven't seen it before."

Alys had the answer. "It must have gotten on at Pluto," she said hopelessly.

"I guess so," said Bob. "Maybe that's what brushed by me when we came in."

Alys looked at him. Her eyes were big. "Bob—the lines on the brain-wave chart were astounding."

Bob drew back from the Bryd as he realized what that meant. "Intelligence over three hundred!" he whispered as if afraid the Bryd would hear.

The Bryd hadn't had time to understand their consternation, but it did see that the red lines on the chart were bothering them, so, while they were unrolling the graph, it projected itself and examined it. Before Parker could unroll it to the red lines, the Bryd found them and made them disappear by bombarding them with a powerful type of emanation that sent their color into a higher spectrum invisible to their eyes.

Then it gathered itself on the floor again to look like whatever it was they called a dog, and, carefully neutralizing the red ink that appeared as a straight vertical line on the graph, opened its full intelligence, and lay there soaking up their thoughts like a puppy in the sunshine. When it saw they were concerned over the final disappearance of its graph-lines, it probed each mind briefly and caused them to forget the graph-lines entirely.

The Bryd was happy, and it wanted everybody else to be happy. Now they were in the state of mind he wished. Without conscious remembrance of the brain-wave lines, they became exultant as they neared Earth, although their joy was saturated with tenseness.

The Bryd discovered they were worrying about absolute zero. Well, the Bryd could tell them plenty about cold—but that could wait. The Bryd was too busy soaking up companionship to bother with minor matters.

It was positively ecstatic when the ship docked at the spaceport and the Bryd felt the emanations of thousands of brains. It knew now that it would never be lonesome again.

IT LIKED Alys and decided to go with her, so it made itself into an invisible aura around her hair. They speculated some when they couldn't find the strange animal they had observed on shipboard. But the Bryd was filled with companionship and just wanted to sleep. So it didn't do anything about their speculations, since they weren't, it saw, really worried. It curled up around Alys' hair and went into dreams.

It awoke with a jolt. Alys's brain-waves were jarring it most unpleasantly. The Bryd hadn't felt such dynamic emanations since the time three brontosauri ganged up on a tyrannosaur—and that had been very messy.

"You don't have to believe it, but you could at least investigate," she was saying to General Hunt.

"Sorry," said the general. "But we can't send out a scientific expedition to satisfy a personal whim." He turned to Bob Parker. "What amazes me is that you support this story. And you, Deever!" He sat back and his eyes narrowed. "Of course, your father would influence you."

"Sir, all we are asking is an investigation," said Parker. "We believe absolute zero does exist on Pluto. The photographs indicate it."

The general shook his head, rather stubbornly, the Bryd thought. "We can't risk ships and men going out to Pluto when we can go right into the laboratory and prove you are mistaken. Furthermore, you'd better not go around talking about it. That's propaganda, you know."

The Bryd raised its eyebrows. The general was a dogmatic old soul. Not bad otherwise. Then the Bryd brought itself out of its companionship-soaked lethargy and began to wonder what it was all about.

The general was speaking severely to Parker. "Afraid I'll have to withdraw your nomination for captain. Can't have scatter-brains rising in rank. Next year, maybe, if you come out of it. It's a shame, too." He turned to Alys and sighed. "The best I can do for you, young lady, for stowing away on a Marine ship, is restrictions. And I'm afraid the Board of Mentation won't let me get by with that for very long."

"You mean, sir, they'll send her to the colony?" Parker exploded.

"I'm afraid that's just what they'll do."

"But that's frightful! Outrageous!"

The general glared at him.

The lieutenant paid no attention. "They can't do that. I won't permit it!"

The Bryd had a policy of not interfering with other persons' business, but it saw the general was about to do something very unpleasant to Bob Parker. Alys liked Bob Parker, and the Bryd liked Alys, so it reached out and took control of a small portion of the general's mind long enough to make him forget what he was about to do, and then quickly withdrew.

"You can have furlough until day after tomorrow morning," the general said pleasantly. Lieutenant Bob Parker stared for an instant and then saluted stiffly.

"Yes, sir," he said.

Two hours later Parker and Alys reached her home. Alys didn't want to go there, but

the Bryd wanted to see the inside, so it used a subtle form of hypnosis to make her change her mind.

They went in and sat down silently.

"The only thing left is to prove it in the laboratory," Parker said, presently. "I've got nearly two days." He got up. "Your father's laboratory is still intact. I'll do it or strain something."

"If they catch you, you'll be banished," she warned him.

Parker laughed shortly. "I've always liked the moon," he said.

By this time the Bryd was interested in all the talk about zero, so it detached itself from Alys and went with Bob Parker into the laboratory. Parker dug out Dr. Case's photographs and tried to study them, but they didn't register.

The Bryd studied them, and they didn't register with it, either. Then it began to look around and to wonder what the problem was. It took a swift look at Bob Parker's brain. There were so many emotions there—powerful emotions—that it had some trouble separating the emotions from the thoughts.

But when it got to the bottom of the matter, it was astonished at its simplicity. Surely these humans weren't that much puzzled over a little thing like zero?

It went a little deeper and verified its finding. It realized then that zero would solve a lot of their problems, and particularly something about Alys.

JP TO now the Bryd had tried to follow its policy of not interfering, but it liked Alys and it didn't want her to be unhappy, because that made her emanations so disturbing. When she was happy the Bryd could bask in the softness and the warmth of her emanations so luxuriously that the cold, bleak eons on Pluto seemed like a dream.

Consequently the Bryd got busy. It probed into Bob Parker's brain and found an unused corner. It left an idea there and sat back to await the result.

It wasn't long before Parker's face brightened.

"I've got it!" he shouted to Alys. "A system of magnetization that will produce a perfect insulation. Sort of zero against itself."

She came running. Her brown eyes were wide and her emanations were so pleasant the Bryd began to drowse.

It was pleased when it awoke. Bob Parker had rigged a current in a near-vacuum to take the place of the kryptad in Dr. Case's freezing-box. The laboratory was strewn with wire and electrical apparatus, and presently he went in to sleep on the

divan while Alys made coffee.

That evening Parker examined the first set of plates and let out a shout. Alys came in and when he told her, she kissed him.

The Bryd found their emanations for a few minutes were highly exhilarating.

But then Alys became gloomy. "General Hunt won't even look at them," she predicted.

But Parker was gleeful. "He'll have to."

The Bryd was inclined to agree with Alys. The general was so very dogmatic. So it shrugged its shoulders. As long as it had mixed in things this far, it might as well finish the business. It projected itself as a cloud of ether and located the general's brain-wave, and then followed it down and did a little work in a corner of the general's brain.

So it wasn't very long before the general was there at the Case home. He looked at the photographs, and, with a little coaching from the Bryd, decided that Parker had reached zero.

The general shook his head. "It's going

to make an awful upset in science. There must be forty or fifty men on the moon who'll be entitled to release. The Board won't like it."

Bob Parker had his arm around Alys's shoulders. "They can't avoid it, sir. It's regulations."

The general was studying the pictures. "This hookup is something entirely new," he said. "Where did you get the idea?"

Parker looked puzzled. "I don't know, sir. It just—sort of dawned on me."

The Bryd was getting drowsy again. It coiled itself around Alys's hair and dozed. It remembered sleepily when the idea had first dawned on it, right after it had left the comet, for how could it have existed all those millions of years at absolute zero if it hadn't figured out how to make its outer surface a perfect insulator?

It hoped it wouldn't be necessary for it to visit the Board of Mentation. It was so indescribably cozy there with Alys, now that Parker had his arm around her!



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(Adv.)



Suddenly Carsten was caught between the needles, caught in the middle of a bolt of lightning

FOREVER IS TODAY

By CHARLES F. KSANDA

Edmund Carsten, millionaire scientist, seems to bend the cycle of eternity to his own wishes—with strange results!

MICHAEL BARRY opened his eyes. For a moment he thought the pendulum still hung there, poised over his bed, the silver sphere at its end swinging toward him. Then the dream retreated. He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes. His body was cold and wet with perspiration.

Sunlight poured through the windows and the clock said ten. Nothing unusual about

that. The flash of white fire was gone too. White fire—an explosion? The dream teetered precariously at the edge of his mind. The dream seemed almost real—a man's face, disturbingly familiar, and something about his marrying Joyce.

That last thought, he decided bitterly, proved it was only a nightmare. Judging from Joyce's actions the past several months

the possibility of matrimony was exactly zero.

Then the pendulum swung past his head, and the dream was severed completely from his conscious mind.

Barry had been drinking too much lately, he knew. He rose, did his exercises, showered, dressed, and decided that he felt fine. There was no hangover. Still remembrance of the dream, the nightmare really, disturbed him. He shrugged. Caught in the moment between sleep and awakening, flashes of thought had gone through his mind. Now he could remember nothing.

He pulled the top sheet off his desk calendar and looked at the date. Thursday, September 13, 1945. It was his day off, and he was supposed to be home. Why the uncomfortable feeling, this staring at a calendar?

"You're getting jittery, old man," he thought.

Where had he been last night? He tried to remember but couldn't.

Definitely he would have to stay away from liquor. No girl, including Joyce, was worth these advancing signs of delirium tremens.

The phone was ringing. He lifted the receiver and the puzzled look on his face gave way to annoyance. He started to slam down the receiver, but thought better of it.

"All right," he said. "Business before pleasure, Carsten. This is my day off, but if you have a good story I'll get it. I'll be there in half an hour."

DOWNSTAIRS he stopped at the coffee shop and swore quietly at himself while waiting for his order. The Tribune, he was deciding, could either go climb a tree or get someone else to fill the Sunday magazine section with extravagance about science's latest world-shaking discoveries. Tomorrow he was going back to straight reporting.

After his second cup of coffee he went outside and found a taxi. He directed the driver to the Empire Building, then sat back in the seat and relaxed. Again the remembrance that something had been disturbing him, and again the failure to remember what it was. He decided that he hadn't been altogether awake and forgot it. It was a fine day and he felt good.

He got off the elevator on the top floor of the Empire Building. Edmund Carsten himself met him at the door, smiling faintly. Barry's mouth twitched in distaste. "Little Napoleon," he always wanted to call him. Carsten was a small, wiry man with an easy air of importance. He was, Barry admitted, especially with his Continental manners, a man who would probably appeal to women.

"Won't you come in?" Carsten said.

For the fraction of a second, Barry hesi-

tated. Some vague, incomprehensible warning, like a flash of memory, touched his mind. He shook it off. It was crazy.

"Please come in," Carsten repeated quietly.

Barry went in.

As he stood in the outer office of what once had been Dr. Winthrop's old laboratory, Michael Barry realized that all the nights of methodical drinking had been an antidote for nothing. Looking at the empty desk in the corner he could see Joyce as clearly as the first day he had come here. He could remember the frown that had made her face even prettier when he explained his intention of doing a series of popular articles on her father's experiments for the Sunday magazine section.

He had seen her with amazing regularity after that, until Dr. Winthrop's sudden death. Then, somehow, things had completely changed. Why, was beyond his understanding.

"Come into the laboratory," Carsten invited. "As soon as the other party has arrived I will have something of great interest to show you. I'm sure the readers of your paper will find it so, since it concerns them very directly."

The laboratory, Barry observed, had been the scene of considerable recent activity. The late Dr. Winthrop's equipment had been pushed unceremoniously to one side of the large room. Empty packing cases, lengths of heavy cable, and tools were strewn over the floor. That only confirmed what he already knew—that Carsten, and Joyce with him, had been coming to the laboratory regularly for the past two months.

Carsten had noticed his examination of the room. He pointed to the left wall, rocked slowly back and forth on his heels and smiled.

"There," he said. "Not a bad job for one whose previous interest was solely in the intrigues of finance."

At the left side of the room, between two giant silver needles, stood a circular thing of dull metal that looked to Barry like a large shallow wash basin. He laughed.

"Carsten," he said sarcastically, "don't tell me you've turned scientist."

"Why not?" Carsten shrugged. "Finance or science or philosophy—or plumbing. A clever man can get what he wants from any field of knowledge. The clever man understands the intrigue of each." He poked a finger at Barry's chest. "But he supplies only the ideas. He lets others work out the intricacies."

"So you're replacing Winthrop?"

"In a manner of speaking, yes. It was my hand that guided his work for a number of years. True, it was a hand that guided to-

ward lucrative channels. I suggested—he did. But for two years before his death he was working principally on something which was his own idea. That research led to an invention which, because of his premature death, Dr. Winthrop was never able to demonstrate."

"The wash basin there?"

Carsten nodded. "I knew of the old man's liking for you, Michael, so I'm pleased to allow you to witness today what may well be the greatest achievement of all time." Carsten laughed at some private amusement. "Yes, of all time."

BARRY didn't like Carsten's eyes. They had always been shrewd, like tiny black diamonds. Now, he felt, there was something more, something that might prove dangerous.

"Come, sit down." Carsten took him by the arm. "I know you have never liked me, but that's something I can't help. Let's forget our differences and have a drink while we wait."

Barry was puzzled. The whole thing didn't make sense. Maybe one drink would clear his head. He looked at Carsten, but could read nothing in those bright black eyes.

"Make it a small one," he said.

* * * * *

Joyce Winthrop sat straight and still in the back seat of the taxi. Ordinarily she was a woman at whom the driver would have glanced more than once in his mirror. Her face now, however, was white and drawn, her hands clenched tightly on a scrap of paper in her lap. The determined set of her face gave no clue to whether the dried tears were from sorrow or anger or cold fury.

She seemed close to hysteria. Her lips formed words that were less than a whisper.

"I'll tell them exactly how it happened, the way my room seemed strange, as though this morning I were awakening there for the first time. The way I almost remembered something—something from yesterday, or only from a dream? I'll tell how that memory made me open my father's diary, read the notes he had made on the last day of his life. Looking at the hastily scribbled equation, at what seemed only a jumble of symbols and Greek letters, and suddenly seeing—"

"This is it, miss."

"The Empire Building? Excuse me, I must have been talking to myself."

The driver grinned. "I do it all the time. It's good for the health."

She paid him, hesitated for a moment on the sidewalk and then went into a drug-store. She waited nervously for an empty phone booth, stepped inside and dialed the operator.

"I want the police," she said. . . .

Michael Barry heard the hall door open. Carsten excused himself and went into the outer office. Looking at the metal basin, whose performance Carsten had called him to witness, he wondered what it possibly was supposed to do.

The huge black box against the wall was a transformer, he realized. Beside it was a switchboard. The two silver needles pointed at one another across a diameter of the basin, and at right angles to them an arc of metal curved gradually upward from the rim to a point nearly half-way across the room. A metal cable, suspended from the ceiling, held a silver sphere about eight inches in diameter which hung above the center of the basin.

Considered together, these things to Barry added up to nothing. Although he had written a lot of popularized scientific articles, he was after all only a reporter.

Well, he would know soon enough. The "other party" obviously had arrived. He could hear Carsten speaking.

"Please come inside, my dear. We've been waiting for you, a little impatiently, I'm afraid."

Barry felt a sharp blow when he saw Joyce. The entire situation had become awkward and he wished he were out of it.

"I didn't come because you sent for me," Joyce said to Carsten.

"Good. You were coming anyway. I was afraid that after last night perhaps you wouldn't." Carsten flashed his smile at her and motioned toward Barry. "Aren't you two speaking?"

Joyce seemed to have noticed him for the first time.

"Hello, Mike."

Barry nodded.

"Carsten," he said, "you apparently have the stage set the way you want it. Suppose you get the play over with."

"Of course, we're all impatient." Carsten led them across the room. "I suppose, Joyce, that you have naturally wondered during the past two months what the workmen have been doing. Very soon we shall see."

Barry was rapidly losing any enthusiasm he might have had about getting a story. He couldn't imagine what Carsten was up to, but it could make little difference to him. He studied Joyce thoughtfully and admitted all over again that she was a most attractive girl. Something was wrong though. He could tell that from her face.

SOMETHING, he thought wryly, was wrong with all of them. They were an ill-assorted threesome. Carsten interrupted his confused thoughts.

"Michael, suppose you were in my place.

If you had the chance for everlasting life at the expense of destroying—say, most of the universe—would you take it?"

"Carsten, have you gone crazy?"

"No. It sounds melodramatic, but in a few minutes, my friends, the entire history of the universe will be changed." His voice sank to a whisper. "And what a history it has been! Do you know, Michael, how many times you have lived the same life, the one you're living now, over and over? How many times more you would normally go through the identical pattern again?"

"You, Michael, Joyce, myself, all of us have lived precisely the same lives so many times that it's impossible to conceive of. We have always lived the same lives because time is a circle. It returns on itself. There was never any beginning and never any end or any change—up to this moment."

"Mike," Joyce said, and her voice was edged with hysteria, "he was crazy all the time. I understand now."

Barry was getting nervous. He didn't understand—a lot of things.

"What are you driving at, Carsten?" he asked.

"Just this. What came before the beginning of time? What comes after the end?" His eyes glittered at them like tiny black stars. "I quote your late father's notes, Joyce. The combination of factors present at the death of the universe is precisely the combination of factors present at its birth. The universe is beginning or ending at any time. When is the start or the end of a circle? Last year the universe started, or yesterday—or today!"

Carsten slowly twisted a dial on the instrument panel.

"But what a large circle it is. How small a part of it we are, and how many eternities we wait for the factors causing our births to reappear so that we may once again go through our brief role!"

Barry wrinkled his forehead. This surely was not the suave financier who had so subtly exploited Dr. Winthrop's genius for the sake of his own pyramiding wealth. Carsten's hands were trembling and he talked like a Shakespearean actor.

Carsten snapped a stud on the instrument panel. Barry stepped back as the air began to crackle. A greenish glow appeared between the needles, reached out slowly like a malignant growth toward the basin below.

"Just before his death," Carsten was saying, "Joyce's father succeeded in producing a force which could affect the fabric of time itself. To prove his theory of the universe he wanted a beam that would probe the darkness of time—and he finally succeeded. By determining the curvature of that force he determined the time circumference of the

universe. A staggering figure really. National debts are nothing in comparison to it. The life of a man or a nation or of a world are less than nothing to the extent of the circle of time."

Barry heard the door buzzer. Carsten turned and shrugged.

"Winthrop and I did not see eye to eye concerning the application of that force. Because, you see, it is perfectly capable of creating a loop in that circle, a loop that for example could be made to coincide exactly with the span of a man's life. My life."

If this was a joke, Barry thought, it was a good one. Something warned him that it was not. What Carsten said was too pointless and fantastic.

The buzzer sounded again and someone knocked at the door. Carsten shook his head in annoyance and vanished into the outer office.

"What a story!" thought Barry. "What a crazy story! Headline: 'Financier possessed with the idea of personal immortality rearranges time circle to coincide with his life. Sub-head: It's done with needles and a wash-basin.'"

He laughed.

Then his eye caught the utter blackness in the basin. Peering over the edge he saw that the metal was no longer visible. He stood at the rim of blackness unimaginable, of nothingness unlimited brimming over the confines of a ten-foot metal bowl. He gripped the edge of that bowl, swept by a feeling of nausea, a feeling that that blackness could engulf him, draw his body away to the ends of space and time.

HE FORCED himself away and walked drunkenly to the switchboard. He turned the thing off. Then he realized that Joyce was crying.

"Mike," she said, "I can't do it."

"Can't do what?"

"Kill him. I came here to kill Carsten."

Barry swallowed. "You came here—to kill Carsten?"

"Father didn't die of heart failure. Carsten killed him!"

"Joyce, my dear, what are you saying?" Carsten had come back. "You can't possibly mean—" He looked at Joyce's eyes and his shoulders slumped wearily. "Yes, I see that somehow you do know."

"Carsten, you dirty murderer!" Barry struck him across the face.

The financier winced and staggered backward. Then his lips tightened and there was suddenly a gun in his hand.

"Get away from me, Michael."

"The police know, too." Joyce's voice was defiant.

Barry watched Carsten closely. The finan-

cier looked suddenly tired and haggard, as though the flame that had burned devastatingly within him the past two months had consumed itself and left only bitter ashes.

"The police were just here," he said. "They told me a woman had called saying that she was going to kill a man on the top floor of this building and wait for them to come for her. They didn't believe the story, of course. I sent them away. I didn't believe it either. Now I do." Carsten shook his head slowly. "So I must alter my plans again."

He looked into the bowl and then went to the switchboard.

"Ah, you turned it off? You felt it then, Michael? When this was built I knew that Winthrop was right. That blackness he called the raw fabric of space-time. Through that blackness he projected the beam which could see into the future."

Carsten snapped the switch again and the needles began to glow. As he adjusted the verniers Barry took a step toward him.

"You'd better move across the room," Carsten said. "Ordinarily I don't carry one of these, but I thought you might become emotional." He waved the automatic. "I won't hesitate to use it. You see, Michael, you have only a few hours left anyway." He turned to Joyce with a look of infinite sadness in his eyes. "You too, my dear."

The silver sphere began to move away from the basin. It swung slowly on its cable upward along the metal arc toward the center of the room.

Carsten straightened his shoulders, his self-pity gone. From where Barry watched him half a room away—just as well half a world away, he thought—he saw again only the little man with bright sparkling eyes who was about to attempt immortality, and in so doing destroy all of eternity except for that infinitesimal fraction that coexisted with his own brief life.

Carsten spoke again, and once more seemed to enjoy his rôle of lecturer.

"The silver sphere before you is a perfect pendulum, its motion exactly adjusted by magnetic currents in the metal rail beneath it. The length of the time loop varies directly with the rate at which the sphere passes through the basin. The sphere actuates the force which will warp time into a loop coinciding exactly with the span of my life."

Barry watched the sphere as it neared the end of the arc. He seemed helpless and alone in a vast room with a megalomaniac whom a little knowledge had converted into a dangerous psychotic. Then he felt Joyce's hand on his arm and the room became reality again. Would Carsten, he wondered, kill them, as he had killed Joyce's father? Undoubtedly he would.

Carsten pointed dramatically to the sphere as it hung poised to begin its descent toward the basin. He spoke swiftly.

"The two of you will die knowing that this performance will be repeated over and over, every time I live my life. I had hoped, Michael, not to involve you at all. Last night I asked Joyce to marry me. When she refused I knew that she never would as long as you remained alive. So it became necessary to eliminate you. Now, since Joyce would turn me over to the police, she must also stay in this room when I leave.

"Because today at two o'clock this entire floor will be demolished by a tremendous explosion, and the two of you will be locked in here together. A year ago Winthrop saw the flash of white fire which will destroy this room a few hours from now."

"Carsten," said Barry, "it doesn't make sense. Why couldn't he see what's happening now and, knowing what you would do, circumvent it?"

"His beam was electronic in nature. Electrical currents from all over the building caused interference. Naturally, he couldn't prevent it, because that interference was in the future. Only the tremendous white light of the explosion was bright enough to overcome it."

BARRY thought rapidly. If he could delay Carsten for a few more seconds there might be a chance.

"Just one more question," he said. "You've given me a good story, even if I don't believe it, and even though I obviously won't ever be able to write it. But one thing I don't understand. I realize how you know the date of your birth, but it seems the date of your death is a little less certain."

Carsten shook his head. "The date of a man's death is predetermined by the links in the chain of cause and effect which start from the beginnings of time. I had a duplicate of Winthrop's machine built for my own use. I set it up in my home. Fortunately there was no interference there to bother me. More fortunately still I am to die in my own bedroom. I saw my own death scene, Michael!"

"A perfect story." Barry moved toward the metal track. He shifted his weight to the balls of his feet. "Time—the new eternity—will rotate about your life. Perfect to a mind as completely unbalanced as yours, but with one flaw which makes the whole thing absurd."

Carsten set the sphere into motion.

Barry laughed. "Carsten, you don't honestly believe that collection of hardware can change the universe, do you?"

"Who was it said a child's finger can move the universe? It takes little power to dis-

turb a perfectly balanced system. And powerful forces are going to be used when the sphere passes through. . . . Look out! You fool!"

Barry's body had been balanced perfectly. Now in one stride he took the only course of action open to him. He grasped the silver sphere with his hands.

"Here, Carsten! Here comes your universe!"

The heavy ball left the track, hurtled toward Edmund Carsten. The financier hesitated a fraction of a second too long. The sphere smashed into his chest, sent him stumbling backward.

Barry felt his legs pumping frantically. It seemed a long way across the room. Before he reached Carsten, the man had regained his balance. Barry saw the snout nose of the automatic pointing directly at him.

The roar of the gun was loud. He felt a stinging pain in his shoulder. Then his hand seized Carsten's wrist and the gun dropped to the floor. The financier jumped to the rim of the basin and kicked Barry in the face.

The reporter staggered backward, in time to see the rebounding silver sphere, like a gleaming pendulum of death, come toward him. His hands clutched the ball, hurled it this time straight at Carsten's head.

Carsten screamed and fell backward. The sphere hurtled past him, flashed through the basin, between the silver needles, and crashed against the far wall.

A fraction of a second later a brilliant flash of light filled the room. There was a noise like the crack of thunder, and Barry was thrown to the floor. In the instant before his mind went black he saw Carsten, his face twisted in agony, caught between the needles, caught in the middle of a bolt of lightning. . . .

Joyce was bending over Michael Barry when he opened his eyes.

He felt the bump on his head and managed a grin. He got up slowly and, peering into the basin, saw the charred thing that had once been Carsten lying in the bottom. He led Joyce to the outer office.

Barry wondered what Carsten's twisted mind had actually caused to be built in that basin. Probably no more than what it had turned out to be—something for a most unpleasant means of electrocution.

"I suppose he got no more than he deserved," he said somberly.

"I couldn't kill him," Joyce said, "even knowing that he killed my father."

"The doctors said heart failure caused your father's death. How could you know it did not?"

"When I worked for my father he used to amuse me by writing complicated looking equations and leaving them on my desk. Ac-

tually they were in our private code and were notes thanking me for being a good secretary, or inviting me to lunch. This morning I saw in his diary the last thing my father ever wrote—a long, complicated equation. Carsten knew about Father's weak heart, forced him to take a drug that made his death appear to be heart failure."

J

JOYCE hid her head on Barry's chest.

"Mike, it's all been so terrible. Carsten told me that you and Father had argued violently just before his death, and that the excitement had been too much for his bad heart. I guess I believed him. I couldn't bear to see you after that, so I came here with Carsten, thinking he was trying to finish my father's work."

Barry put his arms around her. "While I, not being able to understand anything, tried to dissolve your memory in alcohol."

"Mike, you don't believe what Carsten said?"

"No. He sounded almost convincing, but there was a flaw in his argument. He said for the first time today the order of the universe would be changed. If time duplicated itself endlessly in a perfect circle it could never be changed. All this would have had to happen before. It would have happened always. There could never be a first time."

"Mike, your shoulder is bleeding."

"He wasn't a very good shot," Barry said. "The bullet only grazed me. But we'd better get out of here. I know a doctor on the far side of town who won't ask questions. Then I'll call the police, but we won't be here. There'll be a lot of explaining to do, and today I don't even feel like trying to explain."

Barry went back into the laboratory. He glanced about the place, but there was absolutely nothing there to cause an explosion. He thought of the possibility of fire from a short-circuited cable, found the master switch and cut off the electric current.

The lights went out. The blinds had been drawn, and as he left the room there was no light except a glow at the tip of one of the needles which had not yet cooled.

"Even Carsten's talk about your father's time beam must have been hallucination," he said, as he opened the door. "Certainly Carsten couldn't have seen himself die in his bedroom."

The door closed on the darkened laboratory. The electric clock had stopped and there was no sound except for the slow drip of a faucet across the room from the basin and the silver needles. . . .

The white spark at the end of one of the needles did not extinguish itself. It grew slowly, feeding on the metal. It was the flame of which suns are made, the fire of

disintegrating atoms which, feeding on itself, grows larger and larger.

The faucet continued to drip, and the flame grew more brilliant. It was becoming an unstable thing which would suddenly engulf the entire sliver of metal and burst into energy as primordial as the fabric of space and time itself.

It was nearly two when the scout car swung around the corner and the two policemen saw the Empire Building three blocks ahead.

"Same place again," the driver said. "I'm sure tired of these crackpot calls. First the dame with her story she's going to kill somebody there, and this time a man says the body is waitin' there."

"Somebody's having a joke with the Police Department, I'm thinking. I wouldn't know what to do any more if something really happened."

A concussion shook the street and the tires of the car screeched as the driver clamped on the brakes.

"Do you see that, man!" he yelled.

"The Empire Building—it's—" His words were lost in a deafening roar. . . .

After leaving the doctor's office Barry and Joyce went into the nearest show, then had dinner in a small café beside the theatre. When they came out his shoulder throbbed dullly and he felt tired and numb.

Newsboys were shouting extras in the streets. Barry bought a paper and hailed a cab. He glanced at the headline:

EMPIRE BUILDING DEMOLISHED BY EXPLOSION

Barry felt sick at the pit of his stomach. If this was coincidence, then Fate was playing nasty tricks with his sanity.

"What is it?" asked Joyce.

"Nothing." He put the paper aside hastily. "Just an accident downtown. Joyce," he said suddenly, "let's not wait any longer. Let's get married tomorrow."

She smiled. "I'm not making any mistakes again. Whatever you say is all right from now on."

He left her at her apartment and went home. He lay in bed and tried to read, but couldn't. He should have been excited about tomorrow, but tomorrow seemed far away.

THEN there were things about today that puzzled him. He tried to remember everything that had happened, but the morning might as well have been a half century ago. One thing remained in his mind. Suppose Carsten had been right? Suppose there was a beam which could see the future? Suppose Carsten had seen himself die, the way he would have died in the normal course of events. Then by his very knowledge of

what was to happen he had altered that course.

Suppose Carsten had been right? The silver sphere, after all, had passed through the basin, but at a prodigiously greater speed than Carsten had planned. In that case the time loop might be shortened to weeks or even a day.

He pushed the thought away. Time enough for investigation tomorrow. There was evidence enough that Edmund Carsten had been as mad as a March hare.

Then a line from a book that he had read back in college, something from Nietzsche, came to taunt him.

For whatsoever can run its course of all things, must once more run. And must we not return and run in that other lane out before us—must we not eternally return?

He grunted and rolled over. If he weren't careful he might start believing all the wild stories he had written for the Sunday magazine section.

Finally he fell asleep. . . .

Sunlight poured through the windows and the clock said ten when Michael Barry awakened. For a moment he thought the pendulum still hung there, poised over his bed. Then the dream retreated. He sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes. His body was cold and wet with perspiration.

The flash of white fire was gone too. The dream teetered precariously at the edge of his mind. Something about an explosion, a malevolent, disturbingly familiar face. Something about his marrying Joyce. Then the pendulum, with the silver sphere on the end, flashed past his head, and the dream was severed completely from his conscious mind.

He pulled the top sheet off his desk calendar and looked at the date. Thursday, September 13, 1945. Why the uncomfortable feeling, this staring at a calendar?

The phone was ringing. He lifted the receiver and the puzzled look on his face quickly gave way to one of annoyance.

"All right. Business before pleasure, Carsten. This is my day off, but if you have a good story I'll get it. I'll be there in half an hour."

Downstairs he stopped at the coffee shop, then took a taxi to the Empire Building, rode to the top floor on the elevator. Edmund Carsten himself met him at the door, smiling faintly.

"Come in," he said.

For the fraction of a second Barry hesitated. Some vague, incomprehensible warning, like a flash of memory, touched his mind. He shook it off. It was crazy.

"Please come in," Carsten repeated quietly.

He went in.

THE READER SPEAKS

(Continued from page 10)

lightweight STF fans at once.

To give the fantasy fans something to chill about, Keith Hammond is also present with a novelet that certainly is outstanding, even for this top-flight author. **CALL HIM DEMON** is really a horror story, but it is a horror story literally and figuratively out of this world—and out of most others, for that matter. As an added inducement, it is illustrated by Virgil Finlay.

The short-story quota should be better than par for the course, since a number of long-missed authors have returned from the wars. And for the discriminating, there will be **THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY** and, of course, ye Sarge. It should be quite an issue.

So, having disposed of the preliminaries, what say we settle down to the real business of the meeting—yes, the old space dog does mean that ray-gun and rocket-blast section of the department devoted to disposing of and being disposed of by the letters from readers.

All together now, Froggo, Wart-ears and Snaggletooth, roll out that big keg of Xeno. The letter pile is both long and strong, this time—in fact, some of it is rancid. Let it trickle slowly down the Sarge's gullet. This Xeno has got to last until the new batch is brewed.

LETTERS FROM READERS

WHAT'S this? Yon missive has an un-gently nostalgic aroma, Snaggie, old tooth. Odds aments, it is from the long-missing grulzak catcher from the Jersey Meadows himself. Yes, kiwis, Kennedy is back, and let's check him for form. Fan me with Neptunian cheddar, Wart-ears, it has limburger beat a Martian mile.

ROCKET-BYE, BABY

By Joe Kennedy

Saturn, old thing: Awright, so my will power has been broken down. So I'm once again writing a letter to *The Reader Speaks*. So what do I care if I have got ten bureau drawers stuffed full of unanswered mail? . . . dozen fanzines to publish . . . millions of old collectors hounding my footprints. Bah! The agony of it.

The *Winter TWS* was late in hitting the newsstands in *there parts*, trust this missive isn't too delayed. Sadly we long for the day when magazine deliveries will be made *only* by non-stop rocket mail. No, seriously, it's not at all improbable, if late reports from the science front are any indication.

Now looka here, Sergeant—your derogatory remarks anent the marshlands of Jersey were most unappreciated. After all, everybody knows that New York is nothing but a minor suburb of Jersey. A fungus-like outgrowth, so to speak.

This issue's *Reader Speaks*, was, as always, most enjoyable, even the some of the letters seemed a bit old. Chad Oliver can write good letters without trying—and it's good to see Gene Hunter back. I've traded a few letters with William G. Matthews, and

he's apparently another fan prodigy. Hope he becomes a regular contributor to the column.

Elsner's letter was mildly infuriating. Quote: "... to say the least, Joke's writing has an odorous aroma." Tsk, now, Henry. Such remarks astound yours truly—and never mind if they are true.

Foopy on rocket societies! Who wants to go to Jupiter. I read in a book once like as how the biggest planets was nothing but big lumps of gas with a thin crust over it, and if you jumped up and down hard on the surface of Jupiter it might bust through with you and then where would you be?

Besides, the rocket societies might put all the sf mags out of business. Suppose space travel is developed in the near future, and brought to a point of near-perfection through use of atomic power. Sf fiction writers formerly doing nothing but interplanetary tales might find themselves being rapidly out-dated by reality.

Unless some radically new concepts were introduced, the old style of rocket-and-ray-gun scientifiction might find itself in somewhat the same position as the western stories of years goneby are today—antiquated before its possibilities were realized, and of interest now only as a literary curiosity, important mainly for its influence on the fiction that followed it.

Ah, but to lighter things. Who did the illustrations for "The Disciplinary Circuit"!—Verne S. Stevens? After a quick glance at page 47, I was sure it was Finlay. On the other hand, the full pager on 45 is remarkably similar to Lawrence's work. At any rate, this artist is definitely on the terrific side—hang on to him!

The illustrations for "Atomic Station" proved interesting. The chap wielding the axe bears a striking resemblance to a grulzak in a sun-suit. Grulzaks, however, have scales rather than hair, and bulge a little more at the seams. (This useful bit of information was gleaned from the pages of the *Encyclopedia of History*, Volume XXV, edition of 2799 A.D.)

Doubtlessly, you will be thunder-stricken to learn that yours truly just concluded a poll of fandom, to determine, among other things, the top magazine tales of the year 1945. The most popular tales, published in TWS and *Startling*, were:

1. **SWORD OF TOMORROW**, by Kuttner.
2. **IRON MEN**, Loomis.
3. **THINGS PASS BY**, Leinster.
4. **FORGOTTEN MAN OF SPACE**, P. S. Miller (Hall of Fame).

5. **AFTERMATH**, Fearn.

6. **INTERLINK**, Fearn.

Also a scattering of votes for Brackett's **SHADOW OVER MARS**, which didn't count, since that was a 1944 hangover. Complete poll results will be found in *The 1945-46 Fantasy Review*, a lengthy summary of the entire science-fantasy field for the past twelve months.

Of course, I wouldn't think of plugging any publication of mine in a letter section like this, but I'll just mention anyway that the *Review* is available at 25c per copy from Kennedy, only 100 copies being printed, and they're going fast, so get a move on, you stragglers!

We thanks you.

Fans residing in or around the North Jersey area are urged to contact me, if they're interested in joining an informal SF discussions club. Meetings are held occasionally in Newark and other marshlands, and members at this writing include Sam Moskovitz, Joe Kennedy, Lloyd Alpaugh, Jr., Joe Kennedy, George Fox, Jr., Joe Kennedy, Jr., R. J. Gaulin, Joe Kennedy, and various other peoples. I forgot to mention—I'm a member myself. This factor alone should be enough to recommend the organization.

Another thing that puzzles my innocent brain-cells. There must be millions of potential fans swarming around the Jersey wilderness, for regularly each three months, the newsstands hereabouts are piled high with TWS, and just as regularly, the copies seem to disappear.

The whole thing is rather mysterious—for I certainly don't buy 'em all myself. Except for the fifty-nine copies I buy every time TWS prints one of my letters. But they don't count. I give 'em to relatives. Will try some stories someday. Ugh!

This being quite enough for one trip, I shall close, with best wishes for a happy St. Valentine's Day.—84 Baker Avenue, Dover, New Jersey.

[Turn page]

Ignoring the various snide remarks in this epistle, ye Sarge wishes to send Frog-eyes to *Frere Kennedy* with orders to banzai nine times—in return for the illustrious *Frere's* support of this old space dog on the matter of that *--#&! rocket society. What are those Glen Ellyn kiwis trying to do? Invade ye Sarge's private space domains?

As for the illustrator you mention, it was Stevens all right—and he is something more than terrific. His work in **DEAD CITY** in the current issue should prove that. He may not go in for bubble baths as Finlay does, but he can certainly handle figures.

Ecod, Snaggie, here comes that woman again—and with fire in her eye. Get up the anti-ray screens before we open it up.

FRESH HAM

By Gwen Cunningham-Conynghame

Dear Ye Editor, Yclept Sarge: I forgive your thoughtless remark about losing my "cunning," but to the Pits with you for calling me a ham! In the first place I *married* the name—and furthermore I believe the name in the dear dead past was spelled "Conynghame" or some such thing—so there! And to close the subject I'd be terribly thrilled if anyone who dabbles in the meanings and derivations on names would drop me little notes from time to time. (I'll show you whether there's really any *ham* in me—beside, gosh!—what's in a name, huh?).

I know you're drooling to hear my ideas. I have a lot of them too. For instance, the cover on the Winter Issue—well, maybe I've got a blind spot. It wasn't much, I'm afraid. I was terribly disappointed and made the man at the drug store refund me a nickel. Such a cover deserves a cut in price (I said it and I'm glad!).

The two best illustrations were those on pages 45 and 47. Show your other artists those pages and remark that they are seeing real art. Speaking of art, however, pardon my chuckle. I'm only a poor lone woman with an inquisitive mind. What I'd like to know is *how* (really now) do the various bras of your various pictured heroines stay put. For such scientific atmosphere as your mag exudes, I'm afraid the laws of gravity, triangulation, the point of strain, etc., are entirely overlooked. Also, please tell me where I can get a few of those—er, intimate articles for myself. Maybe with a little liquid cement . . .

On to the stories. That *FORGOTTEN WORLD* wasn't bad. Your mag has done better, but who can be perfect all the time? The idea about star-sickness was super. It's conceivable that man, transplanted to worlds adjusted scientifically to his needs, should unknowingly hunger for the real thing so strongly that he'd need to take "the cure." But all that stuff about the kick-back is nuts. I like my pseudo-science to be more logical than that. And I contend, in my layman's ignorance, that were sum mining at all feasible OR possible, it would still put things off-balance somewhere and result in sunspots or something even more dangerous. Some cosmic balance would be stupendously upset. Does some scientific reader dare to tell me I am wrong? If so, forgive me—I guess I'm just getting old.

Leinster's tale about *THE DISCIPLINARY CIRCUIT*—well, let's forget it. In fact, it would be better so. It was a phony story. Barnes did as usual in *SIREN SATELLITE*. He's never wonderful, but the story made fair filler and I give it its due. *INFORMATION, PLEASE* was okay. A longer story in that vein with better character and plot build-up could have been better yet. But I got a kick out of it in a small way as it was.

ATOMIC STATION—well, it had its moments, I guess. I just didn't notice when, that's all. The glimpses of the pitiful mutants were too brief to give me a sympathetic interest, so that the ending meant little. As if the author had said, "He's a bad man.

Poor fellow. Kill him." Read it again and you'll see what I mean—I hope! *CLUTCH OF MORPHEUS* was also too short for the possibilities the plot presented, but all in all it was the best-written and best all-around idea in the issue. Four lovely red roses to Sternig—in a bottle—if he can't take the Xeno you hand out (No doubt you save the best stock for yourself.).

In **THE READER SPEAKS**, I personally think that Gwen Cunningham had the sweetest letter. She has such a fresh, intelligent viewpoint. Especially fresh (what am I saying)!! Anyhow, for second place, I have no prejudice, so I'll be honest. Give the prize (is there one?) to Guy Trucano, Jr. There was a lot of level-headed thinking, fair weighing and consideration for the other fellow's ideas in his letter. I liked it best.

I must say the artist who drew a picture of ye Old Sarge was deserving of more fulsome praise than he got. It's not every artist that could make you look so—so cute, Sarge!—14850 Roxton Avenue, Gardena, California.

Hold it, Gwen. Ye Sarge is gratified no end that you and *Frere Kennedy* see eye to eye on Stevens' illustrations. After all, hasn't this old astrogator been plugging them since long before they appeared in an Earth magazine?

But, shiwi, you have embarrassed ye Sarge. What gremlin whispered in your ear that such a crusty old space dog would have any occult knowledge as to brassiere suspension? He has survived this long by being content to let miracles remain miraculous. On the Spring Issue cover, you will note with what we feel sure is passing interest (isn't that right, Wart-ears?) that Bergey has eliminated the amazing garment entirely. Which some readers will doubtless consider an improvement, though others may not. At any rate, and in conclusion, a pox upon you for praising alleged-artist Rehm. And ye Sarge is not *cute*, whatever Snaggletooth says.

OLIVER AND ONIONS

By Chad Oliver

Dear Sarge: The old, neglected room lay bathed in gloomy shadows, which were broken only by one feeble lamp perched precariously on a battered plywood desk. A tarnished name-plate was propped carelessly on the desk's dusty surface. It spelled out, in faded gold letters: *Sergeant Saturn*.

A tremendous pile of mile-long letters was heaped before the renowned character. Listlessly, he read first one and then another. He swished Xeno around in his mouth lazily. Then, suddenly, his worn countenance brightened! He regarded the letter before him with suppressed excitement.

"Look, Wart-ears," he exclaimed, turning to a wizened gremlin perched on a near-by cuspidor, "a good one at last! It's from Oliver, down in Crystal City."

Wart-ears flipped his massive appendages appreciatively. "Xlush," he commented sagely.

"Let's see now," muttered Saturn. "Oliver's comments are always interesting and reveal a keen mind. Hmmm—says Hamilton's yarn, *Forgotten World*, was real old-time science-fiction, as only Edmond can write it. He liked it! Well. He thought Leinster's *Disciplinary Circuit* was fine, too, and he even liked Barnes' *Siren Satellite*, although Gerry Carlyle isn't exactly right down his alley. He says he wishes she was! Ho-ho, that's a good one!"

"Xlush," responded Wart-ears.

"Hmmm," continued Saturn thoughtfully. "He says that Long's *Atomic Station* was fairly interesting, and that the Sternig opus, *Clutch of Morpheus*, was

okay too. He doesn't comment on Whiteside's *Information Please*, except for a remark I can't quite make out here. And listen—Oliver says the artwork is improving, with Stevens being a wonderful addition to the staff. Even the cover was good, he says. But he wonders why we must have sex in every picture. Ho—tell him, Wart-ears."

"Xlush!" replied the gremlin.

"Say, this is certainly mild for Chaddo," mused Saturn. "Ah, but now it comes! He says that he is quite annoyed with a letter from one William G. Matthews in *The Reader Speaks*. Quite annoyed. Say, I pity Matthews—the last one Oliver got peeved at disappeared mysteriously, remember? Hmm—he says Matthews claimed that he, Oliver, was color-blind, and that the cover of the Winter issue (1945) was not yellowish-red. If the aforesaid Mr. Matthews, he says, had read the letter in question (Summer, '45, edition), he might have noticed that Oliver distinctly said that he didn't know what made Bergey *REFRAIN* from using a yellowish-red background. Ho—that's rich, Wart-ears. Oliver is always right. He says I had better print this defense, too. As if I wouldn't—he writes such good letters!"

Wart-ears made no comment.

"Ho-ho," laughed Saturn. "Maybe I had better send Mr. Matthews a dictionary, so he can find out what 'refrain' means. Ho-ho. And more ho. A whole flock of ho! I wish this letter was longer. I could read Oliver forever."

"Xlush!" cried Wart-ears, horrified.

"I," concluded Saturn, blissfully ignoring the cuspidor gremlin, "consider this to be the best letter I have ever read."—c/o Mrs. R. A. Taylor, Crystal City, Texas.

Why, thank you, Chaddo. Quick, Froggie, the Xeno, ye Sarge feels faint. He isn't used to flattery. And Chaddo managed somehow to photograph ye Sarge and his three Bem-lins in what looks like Terrean football suits. Cheer up, Chaddo, we'll run the print with appropriate comments in an early ish.

Poor little Rhode Island, sometime home of the verbacious Howard Phillips Lovecraft, now emerges with a new and Xeno-slinging representative.

OLNEY A ROSE

By Jack Wells

Dear Sarge: Please, Sarge, get a decent cover on your mag. for once. I'm getting tired of hiding TWS under my coat until I get it into the privacy of my own small room where beauties in glassite space suits and horrific BEMs hold no terrors and shock no unwary passerby.

The cover on the Winter Ish wasn't so bad as that on the Summer, but I still got a wicked glance from the salesgirl when I bought it. Sort of a "My Gracious, at his age" look.

Enough about the cover. On to the meat of the mag. According to your rating system the stories ran:

"The Disciplinary Circuit"—13 jugs. It was by far the best I've seen in a long time.

"Forgotten World"—8 jugs. Run of the Mill novel.

"Information Please"—9 jugs. A rest from over-drives, proton guns, and such. Most enjoyable.

"Clutch of Morpheus"—5 jugs. Typical of most short stories but with a new twist.

"Siren Satellite"—3 jugs. A Bronx cheer for this yarn. Too much math, monsters and female adventures. (P.S. If the monster was quick enough to jump into the mutineer's airlock, why couldn't it catch the marooned heroes?)

"Atomic Station"—1/2 jug. This definitely stank! Never, never let a story like this into your otherwise good mag. It was worse than the cover.

The Winter Ish was not up to the usual TWS standards, but Murray Leinster's novelet boosted it from fair to pretty good. Get him to write a couple of novels for the Summer and Fall TWS. Then watch the circulation go up! Next get a cover like that

[Turn page]

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for "Devils From Darkonia" and see it soar!

I'm not sending along any pictures of you, Sarge, because art has suffered enough on your cover. (Where have I heard that before?)—275 Olney Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

Well, that last information is something to be thankful for, Froggo, even if we must take our praises in crumbs. And speaking of crumbs—don't pick on our covers! Ye Sarge is tired of all this caterwauling over Bergey's BEMS, bums and babes. They don't hurt circulation a whit and the illustrious Earle is one of the finest extant practitioners of his especial form of art.

Norma Tufts is back, apparently after being on the move for some time, and with a pat on the head for Snaggletooth. Can such things be? Lock him up in a compression chamber, Wart-ears, before he blows up and bursts!

SNAGGIE'S GIRL

By Norma Tufts

Dear Sarge: Well, here I am again back in the fold. I have been navigating around these United States and only stopped long enough to read the Winter Ish of TWS and write one of my letters. Of course, this is what I call a letter and 'tain't necessarily so.

Thanks for publishing my last missive, it brought me no end of fan mail, which I enjoyed. Those friends I told you about in my last letter insisted that I was a celebrity, which sounded like sweet music in these decrepit ears.

But on to the literature in your afore-mentioned mag. As per usual, I couldn't be pulled away until I had read it from cover to cover, and was literally a BEM during the process. I especially liked FORGOTTEN WORLD. It was a well-done piece of work. And I'm not talking about a steak or you recuperating from a slug of Xeno. I also enjoyed what I call the surprise story of the ish, CLUTCH OF MORPHEUS. It worked itself out so well and I was so glad to know that guy got some sleep.

Maybe you would be interested in an episode that happened to yours truly. I arrived in a town en route to another (confusing, isn't it?) and asked at a local hotel for a room to rest my weary bones. The proprietor said, "No rooms," so I promptly said I would sic Snaggletooth onto him. Lo and behold! Portals opened and I slept that cold and blustery night. Moral—you have to know the right people—or something. Thanks, Snaggie, old boy.

All good things must come to an end—so just because this is bad we can't make an exception.—3373 Pioneer Avenue, Salt Lake City, Utah.

You asked for it, Norma. Snaggle just took off through the space port in a special one-Bemlin rocket, headed for Salt Lake City. So if you are considering another move, better do it in a hurry and cover your tracks. Snaggle isn't exactly meant to date human girls, but he can dream, can't he? Otherwise, thanks for the letter. It was silly but sweet. Xeno, Froggo! And slap those webbed feet of yours faster, hear?

ICE CUBE

By Guy Trucano Jr.

Dear Sarge: Don't mind that date line, but it's so

dead cold around here, I'm thinking of spending the summer on Pluto to get warm.

Sarge, this issue is positively marvelous. Keep up this good work, add trimmed edges, go monthly, or at least bi-monthly, and you will be fighting for first place in sf mags. Oh, by the way, what's happened? You always used to tell us that we would get TWS at least bi-monthly when the war was over. That and maybe an annual. I do believe that this country is no longer involved in any fighting, so what are you waiting for?

I think that DISCIPLINARY CIRCUIT takes first place, mainly because of the novel idea involved. FORGOTTEN WORLD was a good story, but the ending became rather obvious. There's just one question. If taking the gases from the sun caused a vacuum, why wouldn't even the copper gases be enough to cause a vacuum, even with the others thrown back? Hamilton got around that rather neatly by simply neglecting to mention it.

I think SIREN SATELLITE should be about third on the list, with the three short stories more or less tied up. INFORMATION PLEASE and CLUTCH OF MORPHEUS were nice amusing stories, with new twists to them. ATOMIC STATION had a new idea, too, but the ending was sorta obvious, as in FORGOTTEN WORLD.

And so to the best story of all, the old Mouthy Reader. You mention to combine serials (those long drawn-out arguments), short stories (nice snappy letters with a point to them, said point usually being in someone's verbal ribs) and pure corn. Taken altogether, I think a separate magazine of the Mouthy Reader would make as much money as TWS.

Hmmmm. You know Gwen Cunningham isn't the only one who wishes she dressed that way; anyone would have to admit that life would be a good deal more lively. Never a dull moment. *Owoooo!!!* I like the way all these California babes are beginning to write in. And I live in North Dakota!

Best part of it is, they both agree with me. That Devil's Fiddle really appealed to me, too. How about another one by the same guy? Which brings up the question, where in hell's Cummings? I'm insulted. And try to publish a couple of amateur stories. What's the difference if they are rotten. Look at this issue. Not a single story or author that a guy could sink his teeth into and tear apart. At least it will give us something else to gripe about.

Love that Pace boy. When I got to his page it was damp and slightly noisy. There was a distinct wolfish whine in the air. I thought for a moment Hoiman was ill, but then I saw Pace's letter. *Wooof!* You know that letter and I howled a good duet. But the neighbors are so narrow-minded about such things as to object. And it was only about 2:am.

Ah, well, such is life.

And speaking of life, Greenleaf's letter brought up an interesting thought. Are there any live sf fans in Dickinson. I know that there are a few elsewhere in North Dakota, but just think what sort of letters would emanate from this particular end of creation if I had someone else to sit down with, over a sociable glass, and talk over the latest TWS.

That would really be something. There have been extraordinary letters in the past, when I got carried away by the fumes and began talking to the sociable glass. I may even have thought that it talked back. But just imagine how much better it would be if there were three of us—fan, bottle, and me. The dialogue would add much to a letter.

You know there is an idea there. Why don't two fans who live in the same town get together and write a letter as they discuss the mag. It would really be something new, and if they included any of the dialogue just think how much fun everybody would have trying to figure which particular person was doing the talking.

And there's always an argument in these pages. Think how much better it would be if the debate took place in the same letter. There would be none of this waiting for three months to read a snappy come-back, and then having to look up the last issue to see what it was coming back at.

All right, so it's moronic. I still think it would be fun.—Dickinson, North Dakota.

Quite possibly it would, Guy. After all, where would ye Sarge be if he didn't have [Turn page]

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As for your query about a vacuum created by copper gases, this old space dog is passing it along to any scientifically-minded fans who feel like answering it in kind. Frankly, he'd like to know himself.

Oh, oh—get the Xeno quick, Froggo. Here comes one of those fans with a lot of questions. Well, let's settle down under our quiz-caps and catch his beam.

DR. NO-I. Q.

By Norman W. Storer

Dear Sarge: I will state the fact frankly: I have read only three issues of TWS. If I can get more, dear thing, please tell me where. I have loved it since the day I discovered it, along with science-fiction. It's getting so that every time I enter a pharmacist's, (drugstore, dope!) I wander over to the magazine rack and peer, usually in vain, over the pulps for some type size, or kind of SF.

There just ain't enough!

I am also a newcomer to "The Reader Speaks." I never wrote a letter like this before, so don't be alarmed.

Please don't.

Now, following the popular trend, I shall review the Winter ish, which has just reached my shabby corner of this poor old world.

First off, I would like to say that I enjoyed "Forgotten World" a great deal. I can't find a thing wrong with it. It seems to me that it is along Murray Leinster's (mah hero!) type of thinking. Which brings us to the next tale on the list, by Leinster, entitled "The Disciplinary Circuit." Usually I enjoy Mr. Leinster's work a lot ("Things Pass By"), but he is probably way ahead of me, because I don't seem to connect with his latest.

What's the point? It's got lots of scientific gibberish, (which I skipped) and a good plot, but it sounds like mama gave him just a minute to finish it before bedtime.

Maybe I'm just thick. But I like the idea as he explains it in "The Story Behind the Story."

Here is a quick judging of the rest of the contents. "Siren Satellite" was fair, but rather drawn-out. "Information, Please" was disappointing. Such a promising story and such a sad ending. There ought to be a law! "Atomic Station" stank, although I did like the somewhat vague explanation of Einstein's theory (?) concerning time-space (gad, Ah say, gad, let's not all jump on me at once!). "Clutch of Morpheus" was the best of the shorts and by the Xeno-jug system, it should take about six quarts of Xeno. Diluted, of course. Only you, O venerable and leather-throated patriarch, can take the stuff straight.

The pics were fair, the best for "The Disciplinary Circuit" and the worst for "Clutch of Morpheus." Mr. Bergey ought to be complimented on his lovely cover. It has human beings with (at last!) human expressions on their human faces.

Of the letters, Oliver's was the best, and, incidentally, inspired this letter.

Down Chad, down! Stop licking my hand.

Another thing I would like to comment on is this. Why do people beat on "Purple Dusk" and praise "Sword of Tomorrow"? I think in a vice-versa style on this. I think "Purple Dusk" is a noble attempt into a little-used field, while "Sword" is just another of your lukewarm "novels of the future."

Now, for a few questions. First, how do you pronounce Xeno? Like "X-eno" or like "zeno?" Secondly, what is this "amateur yarn" Mr. Pace speaks of in his illuminating epistle? I have often thought

I could write an "amazing novelet" or something. And finally, does anyone in the audience like boogie? I would like to correspond with them, as I like boogie nearly as well as SF.

So, having done my stint (and if it doesn't keep you busy, Sarge, I don't know what will), I will close in the way approved of by millions—the C. Oliver way (lay on, Macduff).

"And so, giving a weary sigh, our hero sinks back into his bed of slush, along with Oliver, Kennedy and that small bit of protoplasm who yields the mighty printing press, the Sarge."—1716 Mississippi Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

Holy Mercurian prairie cows, Norman, welcome and all that—but do you really want to know all this stuff? Okay, so you do. Let's see—if you were unable to comprehend the social slant of Leinster's DISCIPLINARY CIRCUIT even after reading his comment in the author column, there is little this old space dog can say. Suffice it to explain that it contained a sharp irony on those who would see a world run entirely on lines of scientific and material order and efficiency without regard for the human occasion. It is, in short, a brilliant attack on logic as so often essayed in government.

Xeno, Frog-eyes, after that blast. All right, Xeno is pronounced "zeeno" and not like the Xavier in Francis of the same name. The amateur contest was an effort, long since, abandoned by ye Sarge, to run one story written by an unestablished writer in each issue. The idea was sound, although the winners were paid merely at professional rates. The trouble was that the stories grew so poor

[Turn page]

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ing, now or any other century. The point is, however, that the action of the yarn takes place only eight years from now. If that pic is prophetic, I'm sending in for my correspondence course right now so I'll be ready to hire a few of dem and dose.

ATOMIC STATION wasn't bad, but the ending was abrupt. How do you work it, Sarge—just lop off the galleys when you come to the bottom of the page? I was mildly interested to know how these evident "quaranteeners" would be received, after a silence of a hundred and some odd years.

Ah yes, SIREN SATELLITE . . . How would it be to rig up a duel with ten-pound atom bombs between Gerry (Sour-puss) Carlyle and John (Jerk) Carstairs on some nice secluded spot like the sunward side of Mercury? Gladly would I even relinquish the space this letter would take, for the worthy chronicling of the event.

I have made little mention of Xeno in this letter, but I am arranging to have a representative of Xeno-holics Xonymous call on you. Personally, I think that Wart-ears, Frog-eyes and Snaggletooth are of the same breed of cat as the things that Ray Milland was seeing in the Lost Weekend. They say there is no cure, but they can make an arrested case out of you—and I do mean arrested, in YOUR case.—150 W. Walnut St., Pasadena 3, Calif.

We are sacking Gerry (sweetyface) Carlyle and John (genius) Carstairs, along with our three little Bemlins, on you, Senor Scots-wa-hae-wi-Wallace-bled McClay. Gerry is under orders to remain well out of reach and be content with baiting the trap.

QUICK! THE XENO!

By David J. Thomas

Dear Sarge: Congratulations! At last the impossible has happened—an issue of TWS has come out without one bad story in it! That calls for a celebration. Haul

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A VETERAN'S NON-WOLF HOWLS

By Wallace H. McClay

Dear Sarge: Cheesecake I can stand; in fact I can stand and ogle, but misinterpretation is another thing. I don't pay too much attention to the covers, other than that the lurid inks make an awful mess when my infant gets hold of them, but I'm of the opinion that the inside illustrations should follow through with what the author has to say about the characters, regardless of how screwy that might be.

I am as interested as the next guy, or even the next one, in the feminine form divine with its Earl Wilson delights, but just because I like to look at a futuristic pin-up is no reason for an illustrator to go all out in undressing the future femmes and then putting a little dab here and there in full defiance of the more abundant wardrobe supplied by the author.

I've read the mag ever since it was given birth to, back about 1930 I believe, so I should know better—but still I rifle through the illustrations first and after an appropriate and manly drool I start reading, hoping that perhaps THIS story will have a BABE in it that looks like THAT.

An example of all this is the pic for FORGOTTEN WORLD on page 15 of the winter issue. From Hamilton's hacked-up story you would think that all the carelessly groomed Marn ever wore was a "faded old slack suit that he thought the most barbaric feminine garment he had ever seen."

Of course, this might have seemed that way merely to our hero, because he was SO TIRED—in fact we had to hear about how tired he was for the first three full chapters. Boy, was he tired—and so was I. Re: The same picture, the illustrator must have been weary, too. The atom gun is shown pointed at our hero's tummy, not his back, as stated in the story. Also, if I know anything about mechanics, it would be a cute little trick to load that gadget in the background onto a truck, and then try to sneak up and quietly unload it at a spaceport.

One of my biggest gripes is the way that SF authors murder the constructing and repairing of machinery. Evidently you don't know it either, Sarge, but believe me that it is quite a little job to reconstruct even a smashed vacuum cleaner, to say nothing of the cyclotron and blast tubes of a space liner.

The average AIRLINER of today is made up of tens of thousands of parts, yet our science fictioneer speaks blithely of our hero getting "spare parts" out of the repair locker when disaster overtakes his rocket ship!

DISCIPLINARY CIRCUIT, Hmm-m-m-m . . . Same gripe, maybe not so much of it. On the pic, the caption reads: ". . . seized a couple of loose wires and struck the ends together." But the text: "He saw the clipped wires EVERYWHERE behind it. Seizing the loose ends he struck them fiercely together." The illustrator must have had a premonition as to what would have happened about that time, so he cooled it off somewhat. And as near as I can see, if Dona ran around like that all the time, no wonder the villain wanted her in his harem.

One last squawk on this yarn—all that build-up, but WHO WON?? It was a nice moral touch for Leinster to spend his last bit of wordage in letting us know that they got married, seeing as to how they had the same roof over their heads, but did they ever get off the confounded planet? Other than the abrupt final, it was a good yarn.

Does this bore you, Sarge? Well, if it does, try reading some of the stories that you've been putting the editorial okay on lately—really, Xeno-xealot, you'll have to, some day—I hope!

INFORMATION PLEASE was unique, in that it COULD happen, and without leaving your own city limits (No gags, please, even though I DO live in Los Angeles County.). Doesn't the average reader ever get fed up with galactic gallivanting? One thing I liked about the old WONDER back in the '30s was that the stories were definitely NOT buckity-buckity Westerns served up with proton sauce. The old fourth-dimensional yarns were a lot of fun reading and even left a little food for thought afterward.

CLUTCH OF MORPHEUS was also good in this respect. The pic, of course, was a little off-center. WHY would the hero be leaning against the wall, looking out the window? The comet, no, because the text says he was speechless, staring at the gal.

Also, what an outfit for a lab assistant to be wear-

[Turn page]

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in quality that there was no way of selecting any of them. Those writers who had the talent to make the mag, quickly went on into professional ranks, leaving a vacuum behind them.

If you mean by boogie, boogie-woogie, ye Sarge likes it himself.

Next comes a note from Howard Gabriel, in unusually effusive mood. Open it up, Wartie, and let's call it . . .

GABRIEL TOOTS OUR HORN

By Howard Gabriel

Dear Sarge: How did you do it? I had already almost given up hope that T.W.S. would ever turn out some more good issues like the ones from '36 to '43. Wotta issue! First place of course goes to Murray Leinster for his THE DISCIPLINARY CIRCUIT. It held me spellbound from start to finish. Oh, those pics. for the Leinster yarn!!! The best I have seen in many a moon.

Ah yes, I heartily agree with Ziza Schramm about an editor's page. Yes, even if I do like you, one can hardly call your senseless raving an adequate preview of the next ish.

Ah, I see that Raj Rehm is plaguing you again with his drawings (?)!

Take notice! I am typing this letter so that you will not strain your eye reading it. Those two first monstrosities that you published I wrote in pencil, put it in my pocket and forgot about it (The first one). Several days later I found it and mailed it away. As soon as it slid into the mailbox I wuz sorry that I had not torn it up. I figured that you wouldn't even be able to read the thing. Now that I type 'em you don't even bother with them.

Hamilton did himself proud with FORGOTTEN WORLD. It is a shame that such a swell story can't cop First place—but Leinster had a better one.

Well wottaya know? A Gerry Carlyle story. First one in a long time. If you could combine her like you did in HOLLYWOOD ON THE MOON, that would be swell. A very good story, but I usually don't care for that old bad-men-capture-space-ship story. This was a little different tho'.

Only bad story in the ish, INFORMATION PLEASE. I am waiting eagerly for the novelet by Loomis. I remember him for THE CITY OF GLASS and IRON MEN. Two truly great stories.

I see that this ish is thicker than the others. Oh, I didn't explain myself when I talked about combining Gerry Carlyle. I mean to combine her with Anthony Quade, i.e.: THE ENERGY EATERS. Those were the days. What ever happened to "The Abbott Family"? You said after their first one that there would be more. I think it was A SONG AT TWILIGHT. Not sure 'bout that.

Well, anyway, unless you sneaked one in an ish. that I don't have I can't find anymore in my collection. And I have most of the issues after that and up. You have not been receiving letters from Gerry Mace for a long time, and since he is my favorite letter hack I would like to see a letter from him. Wonder what's the matter?

I had better stop or I won't be able to fit the letter in the envelope.—1450 East 19th Street, Brooklyn 30, New York.

Maybe your query will bring a response from Mace, Kiwi Gabriel. Hope so. As to the Abbott Family, you didn't miss any retakes. Bob Arthur wrote SONG OF TWILIGHT for our January, 1940, issue, and although the story was planned as the first of a series, pressure of other work kept this gifted author, alas, from carrying on with them around the Solar System. As a matter of fact, the entire incident occurred before ye Sarge took over at TWS.

out the Xeno, Wart-ears, while I proceed to dissect the issue.

The lead-off yarn, "Forgotten World", was pretty close to being the best thing you've run for three years, which is as long as I've been reading your mag. The thing had everything—galactic scope, sound science, good characterization, and plenty of excitement. Hamilton is your star writer in my opinion.

Tied for second and third were "The Disciplinary Circuit" and "Atomic Station." The former was Leinster at his best (need I say more?) and the latter appealed to me mainly because I have always been interested in radiational mutants. Both good stories.

"Siren Satellite" was amusing, but Barnes has done far better. The other two shorts were readable, and up to a certain point fairly interesting.

So there you are—nothing to gripe about. Hurry up and give us some usual stuff, so we can let off our spare energy in cussing you, as in the good old days.—31 Linnaean Street, Cambridge, Mass.

No gripes, no comebacks from the Sarge, who is momentarily incapacitated by such unexpected flattery to say nothing of lack of space. Next!

PLUTO TO MARC TOO

By Marc Mersereau

Dear Captain Pluto: You once had the nerve to publish one of my epistles to you and if you refrain from doing so this time I shall be forced to consider you a coward of the lowest degree, and blackball you from all of the lunatic associations of Deimos, of which I am president and sole member. In case you are interested in this fine organization I shall print here the words engraved upon our portals:

As I was walking on Earth one day,
I listened, and heard myself to say,

"Oh, gad, a Thrilling Wonder!"
"Ye gods, all Blood and Thunder!"

Well, upon turning the first few pages of your Winter issue, I perceived a marvelously accurate portrait of you, which prompted myself and the members of our institution to inscribe this below the foregoing:

I looked within, and there
I saw, on Sarge's head—a hair!
Yes. Look. Upon his beano.

That's what comes from guzzling Xeno!

Another thing. I'm canceling my shipments of Xeno from you until you stop Frogtooth from delivering them. Every time he comes in I jump out of my plastic skin from fright!

Now about your Winter issue. I have an immensely enormous disgust for the way your readers rate the stories in TWS, and when in the readers' section I come upon a long list of story ratings, I just skip it. Why don't the readers, when they dislike a story, say how the story, and the writer's style could be improved and, when they like it, say so in no uncertain terms?

Edmond Hamilton's novel, I'm sorry to say, I have nothing to gripe about. It was good, as most of his novels are.

Ah! Here's one I can harangue about! The "Disciplinary Circuit" by Leinster. If there's anything I fruitlessly gnash my teeth about, it's stories that end in the middle. There's too many of them! Well, I'm not going to bore you with any more of my ratings (no misprint), so I'll come to a pleasanter siren—er, I mean satellite.

Teresa Duna used her head when she said De Pina is good. In his stories he combines action with scientific knowledge: In "Priestess of Pakmari," listen to this:

1. The issue is Summer, 1944.

2. Page 67, 2nd paragraph—"Until recently most of our Uranium 235 came from Mars, etc."

3. At various places in the story it was brought on that the Uranium was the source of atomic power on Venus.

[Turn page]

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The future is dangerous. Fear fills most hearts. But may I say to you that there can come into your life, dancing flashes of the Spiritual Power of God? I mean NOW. And when you do find, and know this beautiful Power,



Dr. Frank B. Robinson

whatever problems, trials, fears which may beset you, melt away under the shimmering Power of God. In place of these fears, doubts, and trials, there comes a lovely Peace—a Peace which only God can give—and POWER?—well—the human race knows little of this POWER, which upsets many old concepts of God, and puts in YOUR hands, and mine, the Power Jesus prom-

ised when He said:—"The things that I do shall ye do also."

I want you to know of this Power. I live for no other purpose. For when this dynamic, invisible Power changed my life, my duty was very plain. TELL OTHERS—that's what God said to me, and I've been doing that faithfully for the past 18 years. Write me a simple postcard, or letter, NOW, and ask for my 6000 word message, which will give you a slight insight into the most soul-stirring revelation from God this world has ever known. Address me as follows:—DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON, Dept. TG 1-46 Moscow, Idaho, and this message, which is TOTALLY FREE, will be sent by mail immediately. But write now—ere you forget. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. TG 1-46, Moscow, Idaho.

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Please, Sarge, don't the artists ever read the readers' comments on their illustrations? That cover—ye gods! I think that the blonde ought to be chewing her fingernails or something, instead of reclining against the window!

Well, I shall now take my place among your deadly enemies to be exterminated, Wartface and Pruneface, so . . . 9405 Burlington Boulevard, Congress Park, Illinois.

The merciless Mercereau is loud
If only very seldom funny
His blunderbuss blasts with a fearful cloud
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Like aged Robinson Crusoe
In "Davy and the Goblin"
The bullet, an orange, goes a foot or so
E'er it strikes the ground a bobblin'.

Moral, Kiwi Mercereau—don't take off for a blast letter unless you intend to fire both barrels. Oke?

STREAM OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS

By Milt Lesser

My Dear Ringed Planet: When one considers the vast amount of time and energy consumed by and for fandom, he is astounded indeed to see that some small percentage of the actifan still do have time to read all of the pro-mags. After only snatty dabblings in your particular 'zines in these many years, I finally found myself reading them from cover to cover. Frankly the turnabout might have paid its dividends.

In the first place, regardless of the name or names you choose to call him, Steve Lawrence is, as you indirectly say, far and away the best artist ever to grace a science-fiction magazine. And I make no bow-outs to Finlay, Paul et al. Lawrence has talent! His work is the most careful—and beautiful—in the field, and he should spread out to do as large a percentage of your illustrations as is at all possible. I realize the others must make a living, and while Donnell is particularly good, even she cannot begin to compare with Lawrence. So—well, use your own judgment.

A couple of years ago I would have said your mags read rather like "Ghastly Hack Opuses" (or is it Opusii?). Now, however, I can state in no uncertain terms that you are hitting a pretty high level, as high as can be expected when you are aiming at a pretty shady level of readers. (Note: If you read this epistle, it means you have enough interest to enter the letter columns—hence you are not one of these individuals of the "shady level." Hah—Kennedy is of course excluded from this latter possibility. What say, JoKe??)

If this letter begins to read a bit like a stream of consciousness essay, don't take it too hard, my inebriated non-com, after all, that is just about what it is.

"Sword of Tomorrow" is undoubtedly a classic. I will not compare Kuttner to Merritt by a long shot, regardless of what the Sarge and several others might say. However, Hank is one of the best of the current crop of writers—and he will have to go a long way to beat "Sword." It was that good.

Say, Saturn, get more of Jack Vance if you possibly can. He's groovy—and I do mean reat . . . also glad to see you've hitched Leinster to a tripewriter after these many years . . . keep him there and have him continue to have that stuff come pouring out at us . . . I laft when I heard that some of the rather ambitious neofen suggested a combo between Hamilton and—uh—Bret Sterling.

Well, Ed H. might possibly be able to collaborate with MWW or one or two others—but as far as collaborating with himself—unless he is like Mark Grayson, unlimited—that would be rather impossible, and also a very tedious job, to say the least.

The latest TWS is as good, if not better than its two or three immediate predecessors—all of which smacked oddly of olden times (which is a trite way of saying the Good Old Daze!).

Edmond Hamilton's novel in the current TWS, while not nearly as well done as Kuttner's in last issue, is

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THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

STANTON A. COBLENTZ, the sage of Mill Valley, California, and author of *TITAN OF THE JUNGLE*, the featured novel in this issue of *THRILLING WONDER STORIES*, is one of the earliest



contributors to magazine science-fiction. To be exact, his first short story, *THE MAKING OF MISTY ISLE*, appeared in this magazine's lineal grandfather, *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES*, way back in June of 1929. In the same issue that saw the Coblenz debut, the contents page included such other names as H. G. Wells, Fletcher Pratt and Dr. David H. Keller.

Truly, Stanton Coblenz is a veteran of the fictional spaceways. Since that pre-war, pre-depression day, his work has appeared in *WONDER STORIES*, *WONDER STORIES QUARTERLY*, *THRILLING WONDER* and *THRILLING WONDER STORIES*, as well as with notable success in *STARTLING STORIES*, our companion magazine. He is an old and valued friend not only to us who edit, but to all those who read our magazine.

As befits a veteran and successful author, Coblenz does not tackle a story with any nebulous idea of what he has set out to achieve. His definitive plan for *TITAN OF THE JUNGLE* follows:

The original inspiration for *TITAN OF THE JUNGLE* was my shepherd dog "Shep," who often accompanies me on jaunts into the hills and woods and whose unusual feats of intelligence prompted me to wonder at the possibility of some intelligent animal other than man gaining control on this planet. It occurred to me, however, that if the animal's vocal organs were adapted to speech and if it had natural tools such as hands and fingers, it would be able to gain the ascendancy much sooner than otherwise.

This is what led me to think of apes and monkeys. Then the idea came to me that it would be curious if man's own ingenuity, misfiring, should put such control into the hands of the animals, and from this thought it was but a short leap to the Fluid of Enlightenment, central theme of *TITAN OF THE JUNGLE*.

Trim, the dog who plays a leading role in the story, was built upon my observations of my own dog, Titan, the dominant gorilla, was made as true to life as possible by being based upon an actual gorilla, Gargantua, whose hatred of mankind had been

aroused by vile mistreatment received at human hands.

Aside from this, I have always been interested in the question of animal intelligence and in the possibility of animals sometime reversing their ordinary relationship to mankind (as in Swift's "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms"); and I mean gently to suggest that sometime, through a missstroke of man's own inventive genius, an animal may get an opportunity such as came to Titan in my story.

—Stanton A. Coblenz.

Leinster at His Best

Vastly more complex are the reasonings and computations with which Murray Leinster surrounds his ideas when developing them into story form. Perhaps a deeper delver into science itself than any man now writing science fiction, Leinster's brilliantly ingenious and fundamentally sound flights into the problematical are the delight of all true sf readers, as his fine characterization and dialogue are a joy to lighter-minded fans.

DEAD CITY shows Leinster at his best. And for a sample of how he put the story together, read his own commentary:

If you ask me why I wrote "Dead City," I give up. I wrapped up a parcel of my pet theories and the story dropped out. You've heard the old argument that a man can't travel backward in time because he might kill his grandfather. I've wondered why nobody has argued that a man can't travel forward in time because he might be killed by his grandson.

The paradox of the story isn't quite as direct as that, but the people of the ruined city were messed up by a very similar fact; the man who destroyed their city was there to destroy it because he was trying to find out how it had been destroyed.

For the rest of it, I've always wondered why in science fiction it's always assumed that it is men who go wandering through space and find extra-terrestrial races. Why not the other way about? And what would happen? We know there are extra-solar planets. There must be extra-human races. Some of them must be far beyond us technically. And if so, why haven't wandering space-voyagers stopped off in the hundreds of millions of years of the earth's habitable period? Or have they?

In working that out, I was moved by my belief that if we humans believe the less mechanically inclined human races are "inferior"—as we tend to—we would surely be very far from nice to a non-human race which were mechanically minded. And of course, if a non-human race had come upon our savage forebears... They would not be nice either.

Our grandfathers used to do target practice on live pigeons released from a barrel. Clay "pigeons" get their name because they're a substitute for those victims. I don't think we'd hesitate to use an "inferior" non-human race for our amusement, and I don't think visitors who considered us inferior would hesitate either.

Maybe it's a cynical sort of story, but I liked doing it.

—Murray Leinster.

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CHECK ONE

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Stainless Steel | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 for \$2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 for \$3.50 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 for \$5 |
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I am enclosing \$_____ payment in full.

Ship C.O.D. I will pay Postman \$_____ plus postage.

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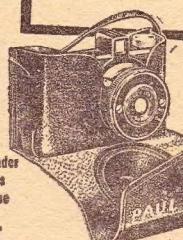
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- Send my order C.O.D. without name on Carrying Case. I will pay postman \$_____ plus postage.

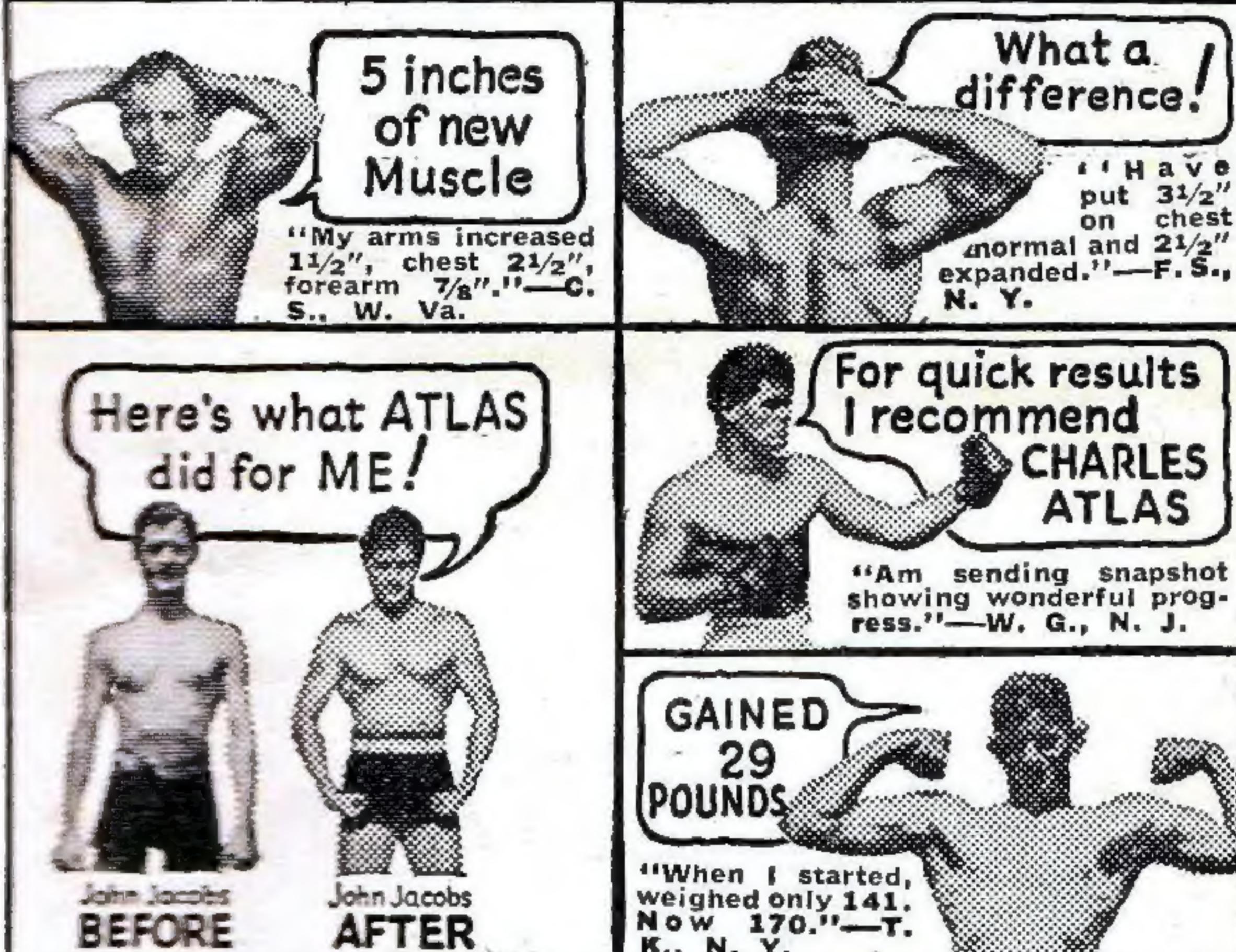
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LET ME START SHOWING YOU RESULTS LIKE THESE



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I DON'T care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

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"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool

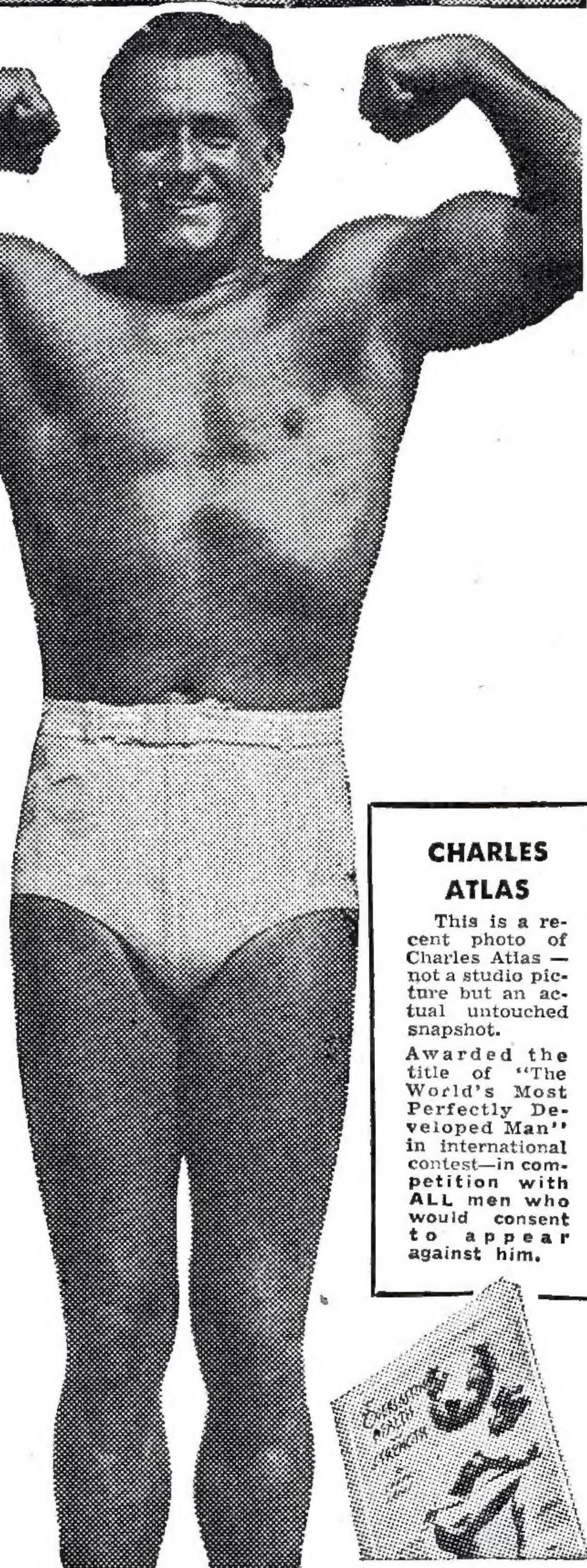
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My method—"Dynamic Tension"—will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And, man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of "Dynamic Tension" almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

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CHARLES ATLAS

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Name (Please print or write plainly)

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